

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

Rev. Jason S. Glombicki

October 19, 2025

In today's gospel, Jesus told a parable about a widow and an unjust judge. The judge had power but neither feared God nor respected people. The widow, by contrast, had no standing, no wealth, and no influence—only her voice. Yet she kept coming, again and again, to demand justice until the judge finally gave in—not because he was good or compassionate, but because she refused to disappear.

This parable is often misunderstood because it can sound like persistence in prayer is about pestering God until we get what we want. But, as Barbara Lundblad teaches, it is really about staying faithful when the world wears us down. You see, prayer, justice, and faith belong together—each giving life to the others. The widow's persistence shows us what faith looks like in action; her witness prepares us to see God's persistence alive here and now. For, this story isn't about a reluctant God who finally listens; it's about a persistent people who refuse to give up. Prayer, justice, and faith all sustain one another and keep us moving when everything around us says to stop. As Jesus said at the very beginning of today's reading, this parable reminds us: do not lose heart.

Do not lose heart – this phrase has echoed in my mind this last week. It resonated as I listened to colleagues serving Latino congregations in Chicago, including our neighbors at La Trinidad in Humboldt Park. The pastors spoke of the fear gripping their communities: families too afraid to leave home, churches keeping lights dim and doors locked to appear closed.

Many now worship only on Zoom, while others risk it all by entering through back doors weaving through a dark building to reach the sanctuary. So too, citizens, legal residents, or undocumented immigrants, all live in fear that ICE might grab them from the street to be held for hours or deported to some unknown country. This is their ministry – it's a heartbreaking, holy kind of persistence—and it's exhausting. To that, Jesus says: do not lose heart.

Back in the parable, the widow's persistence was met by a judge. Now, this judge does not represent God. After all, Luke told us that the judge did not fear God nor had respect for people, so the judge cannot be God-like. Rather, the widow's persistence is how God works in the world. God doesn't bulldoze evil with force or domination. God speaks. God sends prophets and truth-tellers. God raises up leaders like Moses who cried, "Let my people go." When those with worldly power ignore, God sends another voice, and another, and another. You see, that is the divine persistence—a holy refusal to accept injustice as inevitable.

If that's true, then every small act of compassion, every insistence that love still matters, every refusal to stay silent—are not just us being good people. Rather, it is God's persistence breaking through us. It's the faithful at Broadview Detention Center—coming with Communion bread and prayer only to leave with pepper sprayed eyes and bruises from batons—these are reminders that the widow is still knocking. Or, the pastors who log onto Zoom to pray with terrified families – this is the widow still pleading. Or, the millions who marched yesterday, standing up against fear and authoritarianism – this is the widow who will not go away. You see, everyone who shows up for someone else, even when it costs them something, embodies that same persistence. And through it all, God whispers again: do not lose heart.

Some of us know that weariness intimately. We have prayed for justice and felt unheard. We have worked for change and seen little result. We have shouted into the void and wondered if anything will ever be different. We are the widow at the door, pounding until our knuckles bleed.

But some of us, if we're honest, are not yet weary. We move through our days untouched by that kind of fear. And still, this parable calls us, too. Persistence begins somewhere—it starts with a prayer, an act, a divine realization that someone else's suffering cannot be met with our silence. For, when we pray for courage to show up, when we give so another can stay safe, when we stand beside the fearful—that's where divine persistence begins. That's how God's vision takes root.

So too, Jackson's baptism reminded us of that same truth. For, in baptism, we welcomed into God's persistence—into a community shaped by mercy and courage. In baptism, we commit to live among God's faithful people, to care for others and the world God made, to work for justice and peace, and to be reminded who and whose we are. Baptism pulls us into the current of God's relentless mercy and reminds us again: do not lose heart.

Friends, I know how easy it is to despair. The judge so often feels immovable. The systems feel stronger than hope. But Jesus' parable reminds us to look around and see the kingdom of God already stirring. God's persistence is already alive in this city—in neighbors who share food, in volunteers who support the vulnerable, in the ones who keep praying when others have stopped.

So, when despair whispers that it's all pointless—do not lose heart.

When fear feels louder than faith—do not lose heart.

When the struggle for justice seems endless—do not lose heart.
Instead, remember are persistent God who will never lose heart.

Keep praying.

Keep showing up.

Keep loving.

God's reign is among us, so do not lose heart. Amen.