

Practicing Persistence



Text: Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

Focus statement: God's people are persistent.

GATHERING

Welcome

Call to worship: WFW2 2 *Fierce, Tender, Abundant*

Song: GR CD *Awake, arise, o sing a new song* (*Together*, p. 3, for text)

Opening prayer:

O God, we gather to worship you today. We offer praise and thanks to you. We come to listen for your wisdom, to discern our foolishness, and to celebrate your ongoing love for us. Move among us, gracious and wise God. Amen.

PRAISING

Song suggestions:

HWB 47 *Earth and all stars*

HWB 70 *Immortal, invisible, God only wise*

SJ 19 *I will call upon the Lord*

SS 94 *Sithi bonga (We sing praise)*

GR CD *Shout for God!*

GR CD *Woza nomthwalowo (Come, bring your burdens to God)*

Prayer of thanksgiving: "Praise God" (*Together*, p. 4)

Offering/offertory

CONFESSING AND RECONCILING

Silence

Song: SS 67 *Khudaya, rahem kar (Have mercy on us, Lord)*

Prayer of confession: SJ 129

Silence

Words of assurance: Because of God's great love and mercy for us, we are fully forgiven.

Song: SJ 41 *Alleluia*

HEARING

Children's time:

Advance preparation: Gather supplies.

Supplies: Green blanket, container with grass, session 4 symbol (a hand knocking).

Gather children. Recall: we have come to a grassy hillside to listen to Jesus' parables (*point to container with symbols*).

- We are wise builders when we follow Jesus' ways (*touch symbol 1*).
- God's love is like a precious treasure worth more than anything else (*touch symbol 2*).
- God's love is growing (*touch symbol 3*).

Today we discover more about living God's way. What does it mean to be persistent? Have you ever asked your parents for something again and again and heard them say, "You are so persistent"? Sometimes children are very persistent when they want a new toy or when they want to do something or go somewhere. Children keep asking and asking and ASKING.

Jesus told a parable about someone who was persistent. A neighbor was out of bread. He and his family were very hungry. Bread was the main food they ate. So he went to a friend's house. But it was late at night, and everyone was sleeping. He knocked on the door (*make knocking sound*). No one answered. He knocked again and again (*keep knocking*). He kept knocking and knocking and KNOCKING until finally someone came to the door. The friend gave him bread and the neighbor went back home (*pause*).

God's kingdom is like this parable (*place symbol 4 into grass container*). When we pray or talk to God, it is like asking a friend for bread. Prayer is like knocking at a friend's door. God hears our prayers anywhere and anytime. We can talk to God when we get up in the morning (*make stretching motions*) and ask God to be with us. We can pray when we eat our breakfast (*make eating motions*) and thank God for good food (*rub tummy*). We can talk to God when we play or go to school and ask God to help us be a kind friend. We can pray when we feel sad (*make tear motion from eyes*) and when we are happy (*make happy face motion*).

God never gets tired of hearing our voice. God always listens to our prayers. Let's talk to God now. I wonder if there is something you would like to say to God (*invite children's responses*).

Pray: Thank you God for ... (*allow children to offer their prayers*). We ask you God for ... (*allow children to offer prayers*). We want to tell you God ... (*allow children to offer prayers*). Thank you that you hear our prayers everywhere and always. Amen.

Scripture reading: Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

Sermon seeds:

The first parable envisions a guest arriving in the middle of the night. Even though his neighbor's children would have been asleep on floor mats in the typical one-room dwellings of the village, the host relentlessly pounds on his friend's door in search of bread and prevails because of his persistence. The word for "persistence" could more literally be translated "shamelessness."

Jesus' point is not that God is like an unwilling friend who only will help in response to shameless persistence. Nor is God like a stingy or capricious father. Rather, God is like the loving father who is more than willing to give only the best gifts to his children. In Luke's Gospel, God is eager to give the finest of gifts—the Holy Spirit.

The second parable, which focuses on the unjust judge, emphasizes the persistence and fierce steadfastness of the widow in prayer. As in Jesus' earlier teaching on prayer, this parable suggests a negative example of an earthly judge to the positive example of God. According to Old Testament law, judges were required to be God-fearing, righteous people. They were to uphold God's law and defend the poor. The judges were to champion the case of widows, who were the archetype of the oppressed.

But because of the widow's persistence, she prevails despite the judge's indifference. Jesus asks then, how much more will a righteous God listen to the prayers of his own people?

RESPONDING

Song of response: HWB 366 *God of grace and God of glory*

Prayers of the congregation

SENDING

Song: HWB 399 *Now go forward*

Benediction:

Leader: God is faithful.

People: ***Indeed, our God is faithful!***

Leader: Go now, encouraged and strengthened by God's faithfulness. Go in peace. Amen.

Session Five

Searching for the Lost



Text: Luke 15:1-10

Focus statement: God rejoices in finding us.

GATHERING

Welcome

Call to worship: WFW2 15 *Admit We Are Lost*

Song: SJ 3 *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

Opening prayer:

Loving God, we come from many places to this place of worship. Some of us are distracted, some of us are lost, and some of us are in pain. We ask you to find us, comfort us, and give us your strength. We ask to leave this place renewed and encouraged in your constant love. Amen.

PRAISING

Song suggestions:

HWB 46 *I sing the mighty power of God*

HWB 94 *Come, ye thankful people*

HWB 170 *The King of love my shepherd is*

GR CD Som'landela (*We will follow*) (*Together*, p. 2, for text)