

## **Sermon about Luke 18, 1-8 on 2<sup>nd</sup> to Last Sunday i.t. Church Year 22 in BXL(IV)**

**Greeting:** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**Sermon: 1.:** "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Mt 5, 6) So says our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. - Hunger and thirst for righteousness. It sounds so full-bodied, so big. And yet; with increasing age, increasing life experience and increasing news coverage from around the world, a cry for justice forms in the throat. Where is this justice? What is wrong with the world? What is wrong with human beings, the crown of God's creation?? Children, who are responsible for nothing, have to starve because in other parts of the world food is speculated with and superfluous bread is thrown away. In Ukraine and other parts of the world, people must fear for their lives because others think they have to expand their power and influence by force of arms. The Football World Cup is about to start in Qatar, played out on the backs of thousands of disenfranchised people. This spring we had to mourn the death of our brother Hakim, who hardly had a chance to live a free, carefree life. Why him of all people? How can we deal with each other when we are constantly and manifoldly guilty of each other? - Yes, justice is a constant and outsized issue. And yes, who does not hunger and thirst for it?

**2.:** At the end of the church year - in the last three weeks to be precise, it is about the last great themes of faith in the face of my own death and the end of the world. In the Creed, we confess every Sunday the "return of Christ for the great judgement". What does this mean for me and my life? When I look back, can I say that I have lived well and rightly? What can I ultimately rely on? - And on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to Last Sunday of the Church Year, today, it is particularly about

justice in the face of permanent injustice in life. What does God say about this? Will he finally bring justice? Will victims have a voice and be heard?

**3.:** To make this clear, the Church has given us a passage from the Gospel according to Luke for today. In it, someone also thirsts for justice. The following passage is highly exciting and shifts the focus several times to different themes and insights.

**Bible:** 1 And Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' 4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

It is interesting that Jesus is first of all concerned with the relevance of emphatic prayer. We should "pray always and not lose heart ". He tells a story about this. A widow emphatically asks a judge to take up her case. The widow is the "epitome of defenselessness" in the biblical environment. She has no resources to lobby for herself or to enforce her rights. She is dependent on the goodwill of others, for better or worse. She can be the image of all the lawless and the afflicted, but she can also be the image of the church of God living under the cross - perhaps even in persecution. For the Bible, her status is "an indicator of righteous rule and just rulers". When justice is done even to

widows in a society, a society is living according to God's standards. More modernly and still highly topical, the Russian writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881) put it: "The degree of civilisation of a society can be read by the condition of its prisoners." Her counterpart, on the other hand, the judge, is the "personified violation of the double commandment" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself." He respects neither God nor man. - Now, according to Jesus, we should take this widow as an example. What does she do? Her request is anything but the peaceful, submissive folding of hands in the quiet chamber. The judge even fears that she will emphasise her words with her hands. She asks with clear words and does not stop and also takes action for herself. What could this mean in relation to our prayer? Let us pray with clear, plain words. Let us complain to God about our need and not lose heart, but let us also take action and do what is good and right. The justice we want in life is not a one-way street, but should benefit all people equally. This is above all in our hands, as we have already heard in the Gospel (Mt 25:31-46). For the righteous judge is among us and near to us with his kingdom. Then let us also live as it is fitting to live in this kingdom.

**4.:** If we follow Jesus' image and identify with the widow, it stands to reason that we equate God with the unjust judge. Can that be in Jesus' mind? Is God actually not just after all? Would God prefer to be left alone by us? This is where the first shift in Jesus' teaching takes place. Of course God is not like that! "But will God not...!" Humans are often like the unjust judge. But God does not abandon the disenfranchised. He lets himself be asked and will bring justice to his children. And God is not simply about worldly necessities and weighing up justice, but about comprehensive justice. It is about hearing, seeing, raising up, rehabilitating victims. It is about creating a framework in which there is no longer any injustice. No longer that which has been done to

me or to others, and no longer that which I have done to others. He does this by giving himself. He is the right that absolves and sets free. Finally and comprehensively. It is something to hope for, to live for and to die for.

**5.:** Last but not least, Jesus shifts the focus again. First it was about our perseverance in prayer, then it was about the hope of God's answer to prayer. But now Jesus suddenly identifies even the widow with God. "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" God is asking and calling and crying out to be heard by us. Do we hear him? Are we deaf to his message like the unjust judge or do we hear his wooing? This is also the theme at the end of the church year. It is about God's kingdom, which is near to us! It is about God's right to save us too. Hear the message! The hope of recovery is well-founded. The righteous Lord is near, he is already arriving - In Latin: Advent!

**Blessing:** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.