

2019 10 20 – Why Be Affirming – An introduction

Luke 18:1-8

Don't you hate it when someone tells you the end of a story before you have had time to read it? Or when your friend messes up a joke and tells you the punch line before you're ready? In the Gospel of Luke, that happens all the time. In today's reading, the author tells us what the parable is about in the first sentence. He gives us the punch line before we have had a chance to figure it out for ourselves.

You can bet Jesus never did that. Jesus knew how to tell a story. But the author of the Gospel of Luke was not Jesus. He was one of those writers who don't trust their readers. He figured he had to explain everything. And so the reading begins, "Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart." The author assumed that Jesus wanted his listeners to take the role of the persistent widow and that God was represented by the judge.

This is certainly one interpretation of this particular parable but I am going to suggest that, for today, we consider a different approach. Instead of assuming that Jesus was putting God in the role of the judge, let's assume the Spirit of Love is actually represented by the persistent widow. That means we (you and me) are the ones represented by the corrupt, unfeeling judge. If we take this interpretation, then Jesus' parable takes on a whole new meaning.

If we are the judge, then we are the ones who need to listen. We are ones who need to let go of our self-centred, ego-driven lives and listen. We are the ones who need to recognize our own biases and prejudices and listen. We are the ones who need to open our hearts to those we would call “the other” and listen. It is easy to judge, but it is hard to truly listen, to listen with an open heart and an open mind.

But that is what we are called to do: to listen for the persistent voice of God in our lives, to listen for the wisdom of the Spirit of love and compassion. The Holy Mystery speaks to us in many ways: from within our hearts, through parables, through prayer and worship and often through the voice of the widow, the voices of those on the margins.

Today we have with us

a person who knows the pain of marginalization and prejudice;

a person who has heard and followed the voice of truth and love in her own life;

a person who generously shares her time and her story in the pursuit of love and justice.

It is a privilege to invite Laura Budd to come and share her story and her insights with this congregation. I invite you to open your hearts and your minds and to listen for voice of God in what Laura is about to share.