**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**Sunday 16th October**

**Luke 18:1-8**

**Gathering**

Where will faith be found?

In the scarcity-mongering

Welfare-thin policies of our governments?

Where will faith be found?

In the rule-keeping

Survival-focused efforts of our institutions?

Where will faith be found?

In the programme-centric

Risk-averse plans of the church?

Where will faith be found?

In the constant niggling

Perseverance-driven faith of the widow?

Where WILL faith be found?

**Welcome**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and again thank you… for making this space where we can engage together… in a space and moment, beyond all space and moments, called worship…

We shape it today with a story of a widow who has an insistent and annoying habit to chase justice… constantly… and isn’t going to be held back… She’s a truth-teller… an irritant… who doesn’t take no for an answer… even when faced with an obnoxious judge… She is a prophet… and hopefully we find ourselves on her side, because if we aren’t… then it is going to get mighty irritating for the next half hour…

Let’s gather and worship…

**Prayer**

This space, O God

And this time

We set apart,

Laying down here

Those things we wish not to carry

Burdens too heavy

That hurt too much

And reduce us

We lay them here

At long last

And admit to your constant niggling of grace

The invitation to set ourselves free

From all that burdens us

And here find time

And space

To find ourselves

Ourselves not as the world knows

But as you know

And each of us knows ourselves

An honest

Hopeful

Space

That you constantly invite us into

(Pause)

And here we lay down

That which hurts

Limits

Corrodes

Conceals

(Pause)

May we recognise your constant forgiveness

Your insistent grave

Your never ending love

That brings us into life once more

(Pause)

May this space,

This time, O God,

Be our touching place

And your persistence with us

To meet you here

And be unburdened

Is gifted again to us now

And celebrated in heaven

(Pause)

Hear us in the prayer you taught

**Scripture**

We hear a fairly well-known story today… not as popular as prodigals and Samaritans and tax collecting tree climbers… but one that is there in the back of our memories… And perhaps it is there because we don’t quite know what to do with it… A story of a persistent widow who annoys a judge… that the judge eventually gives in…

Initially it is about prayer… or so Luke suggests at the opening… but many are sure Luke was equally unsure what this story was truly about… so he put this opener to the parable so make some sense… but… it actually just complicates it more…

Some questions to ask: who is God in this parable, if God is in the parable at all… who might the first listeners identify with and how do we hear the parable then… has prayer got something to do with this parable?…

We’ll read it and then retell it… and perhaps hear it again for the first time…

**Scripture Reading**

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’”And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

**Reflection**

Do you find it quite exhausting keeping up with the twists and turns or a 24 hour news cycle… especially when it rises and falls on the latest tweet or comment about government… who has fallen out with whom… or fiscal this and budget that… the latest on cost of living… who is going to be better off… conflict in Ukraine… and the list of numerous other crises around the world that have slipped off our radar… or never been on it…

I try and switch some of it off… then feel guilty… and turn it all back on… only to feel angry… at one side of the argument… and the seeming injustice of tax cuts and welfare budgets… knowing there is another side… but also helpless in having any useful input into it all… which just makes me even more frustrated…

Our heads are in bad enough state as it is… after pandemics… and none of this is helping…

Can we not try something simple to live by… Why is it all so complicated…

There is a widow in a story in the bible… that seems to grasp something our world might learn from… persistence… for one thing… and that is justice…

She’s granted the opportunity again and again… to confront a judge who is all but fair… and she niggles away at the judge… arguing her case each time…

When the first listeners heard this story… they would… I suppose… identify with the widow all too easily… It was not a society that was fair… Trickle down wasn’t working then… as much as it doesn’t work now… but they weren’t even pretending it did… The rich just kept on getting richer… and the poor we’re left behind… the gap always widening…

The truth is this parable recognises the state of the world… that the rich and powerful and even brutal… seem to be able to pursue their lifestyle… in a society that systemically makes the poor stay poorer… and increasingly so… We haven’t moved on much…

But still this widow pursued her case… annoyingly so… every opportunity… this one thing… justice for whatever her plea was… so much so…. that the judge… eventually… exasperatingly… even with some embarrassment… gave her her wish…

BUT… not for the sake of justice… the judge does not suddenly have a flash of moral conscience… The judge grants her her wish because the widow is beginning to shame him… and that’s worse for him… He says as much… “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone,yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming”…

Literally he says… “She is blackening my eye”… giving me a black eye… in other words… the judge complains the widow’s relentless badgering not only causes him physical harm but also risks publicly embarrassing him…

God… the Bible has persistently insisted… gives special attention to those who are most vulnerable… therefore… we should persist in our complaints… even to the point of embarrassing the powers that be… in order to induce change… That is the persistence that is perhaps meant in this parable…

And it is the way God always seems to work… for God sends prophets to speak a word of truth, to demand justice, to the religion and political powers… They are often ignored, silenced, or killed… God sends another… In the end… justice can prevail… but it prevails because God’s people persistently speak the truth… The widow is how God operates… particularly through a community of truth-tellers…

God as a widow… exercising only the power of her voice against injustice… It’s not what you’d expect… Tired as we are… persist in what is right… shame that which works against the least… Frustrated and exhausted… God, the widow, needs truth tellers, like herself… May that be who we are…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

For those without a voice

We pray ours may be heard instead

For those who wait

We pray we may persist for their sake

For those who never receive what is theirs

We pray we may work for a fairer world

For those whose plea for peace is drowned out by conflict

We pray we may shout with them all the louder

For those whose hunger is because of unfair trade

We pray we may feed the cause of justice

For those whose land protests are overruled by giants

We pray we may protest with our choices for them

For all whose voices are drowned out, cut off, ignored

We pray we may listen, partner, speak and persist.

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**