

**FAITH: Try it on everything!**  
*“Don’t Lose Heart!  
An Autobiography in Five Easy  
Chapters!”*

Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Luke 18: 1-8  
October 20, 2019

**Chapter I**

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in.  
I am lost, I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

**Chapter II**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place.  
But it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

**Chapter III**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it there.  
I still fall in...it's a habit.  
My eyes are open.  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

**Chapter IV**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

**Chapter V**

I walk down a different street.

Change is the threshold to possibility.  
Walk a different street, find a different  
opportunity.

And find yourself in the challenge of  
letting go  
of the past...a letting go which may offer  
relief but often is also experienced...as  
loss.

Even when making a change you feel  
confident is a positive one, one you want  
to make...there is loss!

Loss of old patterns of being, hiding,  
getting by!

We're often sorta' addicted to the drama  
that deflects us into patterns of  
avoidance...and we may even know it!

BUT, we can stop these patterns,  
walking down the same old streets and  
can learn what to say, how to stay, what  
to pray.

This morning, all I...Karen, and all Jesus  
is saying is:  
give peace a chance!

Change the things that bring you **no**  
peace!

*But*

You have to walk the talk.  
You have to cross the street. Go down a  
different street.

You hold the map. You choose the  
street, even the holes.

What if you persistently saw the holes,  
the streets, the patterns?

## Is persistence a key?

If we view today's parable from the perspective of persistence alone, we miss the point.

Jesus is not saying if you keep nagging God long enough, you'll get what you want. NO!

This widow shows us that seeking justice is nothing more than *wishful thinking* **if it is not attached** to a plan of action.

Justice is not a mental exercise or a right theology.  
You must move beyond complaint and complacency.

Justice...it is not something we believe in,  
it is something we do!  
It's a living prayer. It's showing up at the crosswalks of life!

And we are to be persistent, find our legs,  
and stay focused on the need at hand

even when others would call us bothersome,  
see us as nagging, tire of our knocking on their doors,  
walking their streets...golden paved streets.

We are to be as annoying as a dripping faucet  
in the middle of the night until they finally respond.

It's OK if their motives for responding are self-serving.

Actually, focusing on this part of the teaching  
misses the point. If this judge gave a good result  
even if for the wrong reason,

*how much more* will God give...**for the right reasons**, because of the covenant in our hearts...

more than a promise...God offers true life!

And, God isn't done yet...  
the story doesn't end here...and that new sidewalk...  
well, step it up your pace for justice!

This world of ours...well "it's a dangerous place to live, not because of the people who are "evil", but because of the people who don't do anything about it." (Albert Einstein)

“Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. (Part of that covenant?) If he/she listens to it and acts on it, he/she is giving a great deal of what the world needs most.

It is not complicated, but it takes courage.  
It takes courage for a person to listen to their own goodness and act on it.” (Pablo Casals)

Courage...living your story whole heartedly!  
Facing loss/your own vulnerability, you can stay connected  
to your own sense of justice as you stay connected  
to God and to others!

How?  
Remove that log in your eye, and maybe *then* you’ll see the street, the opportunity right  
before you...

Be sure you don’t put pearls before swine...know who you’re with and if they can hear  
you before you speak...  
lest they trample you. This would serve nothing!

Use your energies wisely, know which street you are walking, at which door it is you  
stand before...before you knock.

Part of the good news is that we do not act alone,  
go it alone,  
have to have all the maps, figure it out on our own.

God is with us.

And here’s some more good news.

God has a short memory when it comes to the times  
that we did not act, fell in, blamed everyone but ourselves.

You know, that situation...you just walked by or are in...  
when you just stood there and took it, or were trampled, or the log in your eye blinded  
you...

God not only forgives us when we fall short of the mark in terms of justice seeking, but  
God forgets it....

**in the sense that God doesn’t use it against us.**

## **Doesn't hold a grudge. Creates no holes!**

Unlike us, God doesn't live in the past, always lives in the present.

God invites us to the freedom offered in this new moment...  
a freedom which releases all kinds  
of untapped energy within us  
to do the worshipful work of justice making.

This is God's new covenant with us.  
Map to heaven already within your heart.

This courage, goodness, faith, is already inside us...  
we're born with it!

We know everything we need to know and have the resources within to recognize daily  
injustices and worldwide injustices...and respond!

If you doubt this...that you know injustice when you see it...think back to the last time  
you had that sinking, sickening feeling in your gut

as you watched a parent go overboard in disciplining a child,

a time when you entered a room and someone was quietly crying and you could see  
bruises and they turned their face from you and you kept going,

that time when you passed by the person on the street whose need was evident as they  
asked for a dime,

a time you saw a person ignored in a public place because of their color or religion or  
sexual orientation,

a time you saw a bully on a playground making fun of and physically pestering another  
child,

a time you came into your own house and one person was lashing out at another.

The list goes on.

In that moment didn't your body align with your spirit  
to tell your head: something is wrong here!

And you knew you *could* do something ...  
but may not have done anything!

You may not have known how to cross over the street  
but you didn't search out help to do it either!

Most of us just pretend we do not see situations such as these, but we do.

We're afraid to get involved, to point out what's going on let alone seek justice and be persistent in following through.

Don't search for and so don't find the help we need. Search.

So often we don't know what to say and don't seek out skills for doing so.

And then we blame the injustices of the world  
on everybody else, anybody else, but ourselves.  
It's not my fault I'm in the same place again!

We even blame God...and we give up and walk away.

Sometimes we say to ourselves those kids, those homeless, those bullied, that teenager, that old lady  
is just going to have to learn to deal with it and get over it.

They have to pick themselves up by their bootstraps if they are ever going to make it in this world.

That's an interesting metaphor. Now think about that...get a visual image of that...

if you are down and go to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, you will fall forward on your face.

**The powerless remain powerless until someone  
extends to them the hand they need  
to get up on their feet.  
Like the judge, the widow!**

Hasn't that been true of you when you were in a powerless time in your life?

Someone's help, someone crossed over to your side of the street with their persistence  
things need to change  
(despite your resistance)

**...isn't that what helped you to change...**

## **living with real and perceived loss to gain new opportunity!**

Can you imagine the impact on this world if each one of us left here today and went out and responded to one itty-bitty injustice in our own worlds?

Start with your own family! OMG!!!

I've shared this before...once back in the early 90's when my son Pat, who was about 8 or so, overheard me talking about an emergency shelter for the homeless families our church was going to offer and all the challenges it involved.

His response: Well, there wouldn't be any homeless families if every family at church just took one homeless person home with them. Why don't we do that, Mom?

He meant it!

I then had to tell him why not our house, but our church home! I meant it!

Obviously, we mean it!

It took me 15 years to help make that justice a reality! To take the log out of my own eye...live the prayer and live "persistence".

Sometimes it takes some time...but all the time you have to have it within your mindset/your heart to change!

Another time, then Pat was about 12, he said to me that he was struggling with the fact that some bullies in his class were picking on his best friend. His friend was of slight stature and Pat has always been big and tall.

He said, I can be standing right with Chris and they tease him and never say a word to me. It makes me feel sick inside for him. What should I do Mom?

What should I do Mom? What should I do?

What should we be doing?

Something! One thing...it doesn't have to be the perfect thing. But get un-numb and find some courage (live your story)

and do something to stay connected rather than hide behind closed doors of denial or hopelessness

Do something...like talk to Chris to see what **he** would like you both to do together, together. Other ideas?

Do something...like watch how we as adults bully others with our words and our will...what it is kids overhear you saying and so think they can say too.

Do something...anywhere, every time you put time into something positive, it affects everything everywhere for the positive.

Do one thing...such as support a church that is doing a homeless program...no dah!

Or growing organic food to give away or bringing 30 intrafaith communities together...

Talk to a counselor, a pastor, a trusted teacher or police officer.

But don't just stand there persistently doing nothing:  
show up and walk those streets of justice!

Now the thing about children is they'll actually do it!  
Show up and ask. Like the widow!

BTW, Pat and Chris figured out how to avoid the bullies sometimes, and how to walk away when they started talking and not engage at other times.

Mostly, Pat found out he could talk to us and we would listen and support him.

The faith of children, their sense of right and wrong, their connection with justice is profound and they haven't been taught to be afraid of everything yet!

**They expect good things, justice. Do you?**

They naturally believe in God and God's plan for our well-being. So they often just do it...do what is right!

They make better adults than adults sometimes!

God wants us to live the covenant,  
come into personal empowered relationship with God...  
with a child's faith, a childlike faith, God's "law within us,

printed on our hearts", realizing God has already forgotten our inequities and is in the moment with us...

**God wants us to come with a childlike faith,**

**and God will treat us like adults.**

We are accountable as adults  
in the living moments of our lives.

We are responsible for where we walk our lives!

If you are going to show up in your life,  
you will come to know something of loss and opportunity that you can't know by avoid  
no matter what street you walk.

And if you don't show up, well...  
each injustice in the world has a ripple effect just like each positive change. The way  
you do anything is...

You can run but you cannot hide from the world.  
You'll get lost, if you try!

You don't have to hide. You can't.  
We can see you there.

We are see each other,  
live into the covenant together.

There are so many resources in this community to help each of us face the injustices of  
our lives and in the world.

Come to Circle of Faith, Centering Prayer, Sunday education...intergenerational or  
Parlor,

come to see me for pastoral counseling or spiritual direction,

serve a ministry...with our kids/teens/families,

seek out how you can play a role in Divine Intervention.

Maybe coming on Nov. 3 will allow you to see the impact you are making on justice  
locally.

Maybe schedule a time to just come eat dinner with the Guests, or serve a dinner!

Ask someone here whom you admire for their courage  
in living in the real world really well...

ask them to have coffee with you and really talk together. Listen to them.

A key wisdom from Martin Niemoller:

“In Germany, they first came for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me...but by that time there was no one left to speak up.”

**Don’t believe in justice, do it!**