

GOD WILL GIVE JUSTICE TO HIS ELECT – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM

Lk 18.1-8

At that time Jesus told a parable to his disciples to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.

And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says.

And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night?, Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 18 the author concludes a long teaching on faith, that began in the previous chapter with the demand of the disciples to Jesus for “Increase our faith”. But faith does not depend on God to give it, to increase it or otherwise, faith is the reply of man to the gift of love that God gives to all.

As is seen very well in the episode of the Samaritan, the only one to turn back to reply and to give thanks for the gift of life, and only for him one speaks of faith.

Well then, in the passage that we see now the long teaching of faith is concluded. Risking to be led astray by the first verse we read, understanding that this is a teaching on prayer. It is not a teaching on prayer in reality, but is the certainty of justice in this society. Therefore it is not a teaching on prayer, but the certainty of the fulfillment of justice in this society. The aim of this passage, that we see now, is the justice and the means to this are prayers.

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 18 we read. “ *He said unto them*”, Jesus talks to the disciples, that, remember, asked Him “*Increase our faith,*” “ *A parable on the need to pray always*”, therefore pray with perseverance, “.. *never tiring*”.

This prayer, we have already said, is the finalization of something, to obtain justice. It is a prayer that ends in the commitment on the part of the disciples so that there is justice. And Jesus, in this parable, presents a city in which lives a judge, “ *That did not fear God*”.

Now, keep in mind that it is a parable, therefore it has a particular language, it is not a teaching on prayer, in fact the Father is never nominated, the name of Jesus’ God in this Gospel. The Father is not nominated, He that has no need to be asked because He knows the needs of man before they are presented to Him, but God.

“*...nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city*”;; widow , with orphan and foreigner, were people that had no man to think of them, they were helpless people, they were excluded. And God, in psalm 68, declares guardian of the widows.

“*...a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, » 'Give me justice..'*, Here the word ‘justice ‘,it is important in understanding the passage, appears four times. “*...against my adversary.' »*” *For a while he refused; but then he said to himself: 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man. ,»’.*”, The picture that Jesus makes of this powerful man is very significant.

They are cynic people interested only in they own interests and not of the needs of others. “*‘... yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice*”,,and for the second time returns the theme of justice, “*...so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming. »*” It is a curious term used by the evangelist, that literally means, “to give me a black eye”

It is translated as “beat me down”, give me a black eye does not mean that the widow gives him a punch, but the expression means “ to damage his reputation”

This is the parable. “*And the Lord said,*”therefore addressing the disciples, “*Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice...*»” – and for the third time appears the term justice - “*...to his elect, who cry to him day and night? »*” Therefore if a dishonest judge is able to do justice to not be beaten down, how much more can the Father, who needs no asking, do for his elected people.

This “*cry to him day and night*” is an expression of prayer that the evangelist takes from the psalms. Psalms 22 and 42. And what do these elect cry to Him day and night? Well, it is the evangelist Luke that has more to heart the theme of justice, social justice.

For this, at the beginning of his Gospel, in the Magnificat, the hymn of praise that he puts in the mouth of Mary and Elizabeth, there is written that the Lord had scattered the proud, that the Lord has put

down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.

This is the justice that the Christian community must bring into this world, but, before this justice can manifest itself, there is need to break with the values of the present society. Therefore one cannot ask the Lord to realize this justice, if first the disciples do not break with the false values of society.

Therefore here the evangelist calls on that desire for justice that runs through all his Gospel. Jesus says “*«Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice...»*”, and the word justice appears for the fourth time “*«...to them speedily.»*” Therefore Jesus assures that if there is this desire for justice, for this change in the society's values, the kingdom of God – because it is this that we are talking about – is at hand.

But Jesus is doubtful, saying: “*«...the Son of Man...»*”, the Son of Man indicates Jesus in His fullness, in the divine condition, Jesus is Son of God, in as much as he represents God in His human condition, but the Son of Man in as much as he represents man in his full divine condition.

“*«the Son of Man nevertheless, when he comes»*”, in this Gospel in the previous chapter, Jesus says that the son of Man will come at the moment of the destruction of Jerusalem. The temple will be knocked down, this obstacle that prevents the manifestation of the will of God towards His people, here it is that the Son of Man will show himself, that is that he will make himself perceptible to God's project for humanity.

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? » Jesus, to His disciples that had asked, “Increase our faith” said, “No, you have no faith even as small as a mustard seed, the seed proverbially the smallest seed. Jesus asks himself if the disciples have this faith, which is the break with this institution, will they have it?”

Here is why Jesus asks in a doubtful way. Also because this Gospel ends in a dramatic way. Despite all that Jesus had said and taught, His disciples remain attached to the religious institutions and, at the moment of the ascension of Jesus, they return to the temple to praise the Lord, that temple that Jesus had declared, “a den of thieves” they still believe it to be a sacred place. This is why Jesus asks when He will come will He find this faith.

A faith that implies the break from the institution, from the values of society, to inaugurate the new values of God's kingdom.