

October 30, 2022
Reformation Sunday
Pastor Matt Duerr

True U-He Gives the Big G

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord, Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. Well, welcome back to True U. That is Truth University where we've heard about the big F. 'Give them the big F'. Give them forgiveness. Forgive as we have been forgiven.

Last week we had 'Give Him the big E,' which is excellence. Excellence in ministry but also excellence in faith. Which is the foundation of the Christian world. This week, Reformation Sunday is 'Give, well, not give. It's what He gives. 'He gives the big G.' And for those of you in Lodi, I am not referring to General Mills, which used to be centered here. No, let me share the background for the sermon series.

At the beginning of the month, I was at a conference, our District Pastors Conference in Reno. If you know me, you know I am not a big conference guy because usually you go to these, and they have a variety of sessions and some expert there or whatever. And especially when it came to my life as a teacher, they would teach you a program. This how to teach and usually it was bunches and bunches of pages with a lot of check boxes; and you do this and this and you do this but first you have to take inventory and do this and this and this. I was just never into all that stuff. I always said, 'Let me just get in the classroom and teach or let me just get into the pulpit and preach.'

This district conference started as they always do with a devotion and some worship time. A Pastor did a devotion on our gospel this morning, Luke 18. And as he was doing, and I said to myself, 'self, I think there's a sermon here. I first have to check this out because he's saying some things about this parable that I've never heard before. I need to make sure that this is real.'

And that's exactly what I did. I opened my Bible to Luke Chapter 18, where we have the parable of the persistent woman. At least that's what the ESB, NIV, RSV, and the new King James version all say. The New American Standard Bible says, "the parable of the woman and the judge," and actually I think that is a better script or line above it; and actually, I think this is a better title for this parable, because it introduces us first of all to the fact that there is a judge. And who is this judge? Well, it says that he's in a certain city, so it doesn't name any particular city, which is the Greek way or the biblical way of saying, this could be any city anywhere in and it probably is.

And as you read about this judge, you probably say, hey, I know someone like this. A person who has power an official with power over others or over us personally. And yet this judge is one of whom we read, had neither feared God, and the word fear here, is stood in awe of God, for who God really is, creator, Redeemer of all. Nor respected man. He didn't respect other humans. So, if you don't have any regard for God, you don't have any regard for man. What's that tell you about him? All that's left is him. And he's bought into the lie of it's all about you. He's self-centered.

Enter the woman. A woman. Of course, back first century they had no rights. But on top of that, she's a widow now. She really has no rights. But she kept coming to this judge. She was persistent. Why? What was it all about? Well, her statement says it all. Give me justice against my adversary. She was being wronged, taken advantage of and she was suffering as a result, and she needed justice. She needed someone to step in and do what was right to make it right. Now I want you to just think about that to this very day. Society condemns this kind of stuff where a person who doesn't have the power is opposed by someone who has the power. And society says that's just wrong. Especially when it's a taking advantage of in an abusive sort of thing and the person who's being abused is in the right. She kept coming to him.

Now, we're probably all familiar with that parable to this point. And you're probably very familiar still with what continues on. In verse 4 the judge acknowledges that he neither fears God nor man. Imagine that

there's a guy with power, pride, and he's well, he's being honest about his motives. He doesn't respect God, doesn't respect, man. It's all about him. Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

Now, in that simple statement, there's three major points. Number one, he knows what's right. Why hadn't he done anything? Very simply, it didn't benefit him. If it didn't benefit him, it tells us something about him. He was in league with or could benefit from her adversary. That's why he didn't do anything. It was all about him.

But point number two, she kept bothering him. She was persistent. Now, when we look at that word bothering, this is where that devotion went. When we look at that word bothering in the Greek. It's *copas*, and it comes from the root *copto*. Which means to chop. Or beat the chest in grief. But whenever it is following the Greek word *par echo*. Which in this case is translated. It literally means to keep striking, beating, chopping or working for the desired cause. You know, kind of like you chop down a tree to get firewood with the tree that falls. Beating, toiling, working to get some sort of a result. What result? Well, to cause the person that you beating, chopping, working against to have to work for you. To cause trouble for that person or to embarrass that person. Then again, it might be all three.

But there is one more thing we have to look at. How does this judge respond to this *par echo*? He responds by saying I'll give her justice, so she doesn't beat me down. Now if we look at the Greek word there, it means to strike below the eye. Now put it together with what was said before. This woman is striking, beating, chopping, toiling against or below the man's eye, she's giving him a black eye. Now that could be both physical, but it could also be figurative. In fact, I almost used that as the title: True, U-give him the black eye. I didn't think that would go well out of the sign out in front. But it's revealing. She was revealing all that was wrong with this judge and with his motives. She was giving him a black eye. And she's doing a good job of it.

Which brings us to the fourth point, which is the actual message of the parable. If that unrighteous judge knew what was right and eventually did it because, well, he was suffering because this woman was pointing out that he wasn't doing what was right. How much more will the righteous God certainly do what is right? Especially for His children, children who need righteousness, children who pray to him day and night. Children He will always answer quickly because He's the righteous judge, He's the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and He will act.

Which now brings us to the Reformation, and Reformation Day, which is tomorrow. So, today is reformation Sunday. What is the Reformation all about? Well, in a nutshell. The Church had become the unrighteous judge letting power go to its mind. And we know what's said about power. It's true. Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. The church had become corrupt. It was proud of its position, a priest, Pope, whatever; proud of their position, look who we are. But we look in the Proverbs 6 and we see that pride literally going before the fall. But pride also leads to the seven abominations before the Lord. They all center on being self-centered. And this was the Church, and it was so self-centered that it focused on money and how can we use the message of the Bible to get more money for us in the church so that we can be rich and wealthy because we're like the unrighteous judge. We don't fear God, we don't respect others and we just want to be making it well ourselves. And so they focused on God as the judge. He's going to judge you. But thinking as an unrighteous judge, they kind of applied that unrighteousness to God. You need to earn His favor. You need to bribe Him. Pay your way to heaven. It's all about you and how you can persuade God to save you by paying Him off, which means paying us off. That will earn your way to heaven because it pleases Him when you please us and make us rich and wealthy. That's what Luther was dealing with is an unrighteous judge, the Church.

And when he was reading the book of Romans, which we call Luther's book; In chapter three, he reads, righteousness has been manifested or made abundantly clear apart from the law, not using

judgment. It's done through faith in Christ Jesus. And there we have that excellent faith of last week. Now why? Well, because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So not like the woman in the story who had a legal claim with this judge, we have no claim. We're sinners. We fall short of the glory of God, and the wages of the sin is death. But what has God done? He has justified us by His grace as a gift. And how does that come? How are we made right justified with God? Through Redemption, that is in Christ Jesus.

To redeem, it's a word that comes from pawn brokers or the pawn stars. If you have an item, you give it to the pawn shop. They give you money in return. If you want it back, you have to redeem it. You have to pay more for it than they paid you, but that payment to them is called a propitiation. It satisfies the legal claim. And we read that redemption is in Christ Jesus, who God put forth as the propitiation for sin." And what is the price of sin? Well, the price of sin is death. And Christ's blood on the cross paid it. God, the righteous judge who we strike; not righteously like that widow, but when we sin, it's striking Him.

Consider King David if you think that that's not a true assessment. King David saw Bathsheba, committed adultery with her, had husband Uriah killed. And the prophet Nathan comes to David and points out to him through a parable that number one David had despised God's word. He despised his word? Yeah, he knew he shouldn't commit adultery and did it anyway. He despised it, had no regard for it. He knew he shouldn't have killed Uriah. He despised it, had no regard for him and killed Uriah. And when you despise God's word, you despise the One who gave it. I don't care, God, I'm going to commit adultery. I don't care God. I'm going to murder, and we can apply it to all of them. I don't care God, I'm not going to church on the Sabbath or keeping it holy. It's despising God's word, it's despising Him. It's scorning Him and saying, 'You're worthless God. You don't mean that much to me.'

And the result is. We do evil because we choose to turn away from God and God's Word. And yet God the righteous Judge, the Creator of all, what is His reaction to that? To our sin which is against Him? He strikes His son. He does it because, well, His Son could take it and if His Son

took it for us, then we don't have to take it. So, when Jesus died on the cross, as the propitiation, He did so; He paid more for us than what it cost God to make us. He gave His own life, and He then gives us His righteousness so that we can be saved. And that is the big gift, the grace that is given to us through Jesus. That's really the big G is wrong! It's the biggest G, the best G! It's the gift of salvation. It's not something we've earned, but a gift, the ultimate gift from God. And that's why we have Reformation Day to every year remind ourselves of this. God is a judge; He accepted the righteous offering of His Son. And God gives Christ's righteousness to us as a gift.

The question now is what do you do about it? Do you live with the gift, rejoice in the gift, and honor the Gift Giver? Or do you say? Yeah, you know, I think I was worth it. God did the right thing. Good job, God. You passed my test. You see how good I am, and you saved me because I deserve it.

Nor is it. Well God here, let me pay you off. As we know all judges nowadays can be paid off. We'll pay you off too. No, what Reformation Day is, It's God saying, My Child, I love you. Here's a gift you don't deserve. It cost me more than you. It cost Me my Son. Will you please come with it? In our Savior's Name, Amen.