New Testament Sermon Reflection

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Date	**Sermon Date: 10/21/2025; Reflection Due Date: 11/4/2025**
Assignment #	**NT Sermon Reflection 1**
Sermon Text	**Luke 18: 1-8**

Please identify *your* framing statements (claim, focus, function) and talk specifically about elements of the sermon by which you sought to make these statements and invitations known:

- **What was the claim of the text? How did the sermon reveal the claim of the text, if at all?**

According to Long, it is essential to understand the claim of the text, which includes the preacher "discern[ing] what the text wants to say and the invitation it offers to contemporary hearers."[1] For Luke 18: 1-8, I propose that the claim of the text is: The Gospel of Luke calls us to be persistent in prayer, not losing heart or becoming discouraged, and trust that God is attentive, faithful and just and will grant the justice we seek if we will call out to God, regardless of the seasons of life- whether in a season of delay, suffering or injustice. As Long points out, "the biblical text intends to say and do governs what the preacher hopes to say and do in the sermon."[2]

In this sermon, I attempt to reveal the claim of the text in a variety of ways. One way I attempted to convey the claim of the text was by introducing it from the beginning of the sermon, explaining what the parable teaches. I start by stating that it is about justice, persistence, and prayer. I then describe modern cries for justice that are seen in the world today before asking what it means to receive justice. All of these techniques begin to point toward what the claim of the text is and how it can be seen within our modern context.

In an attempt to further connect with "contemporary hearers," I used modern examples of when the term' justice" is used and provided an example of a modern-day persistent woman. To help the listeners further understand the claim of the text, there is a brief exegetical exploration of the term "justice" before the conclusion of the sermon where the audience is challenged to take the claim of the text and apply it to their lives.

- **What was the central message of the sermon (the focus)? How did the sermon make this message known to the hearers?**

The focus of the sermon is according to Long, "what the sermon aims to say."[2] The focus of my sermon is: The sermon wants to say that because God is a God of justice and calls us to trust, we can be confident that God hears our cries, like those of the widow, whenever we face injustice and will grant justice, even when it seems slow in coming. I start the sermon off by stating that the focus is on justice, prayer, and persistence. Throughout the sermon, I provide images, examples and information surrounding the word "justice." I also reinforce the central

[1] Dr. Veronice Miles, "Claim Focus Function," (lecture, Wesley Theological Seminary, 23 September 2025).
[2] Long, Thomas G. *The Witness of Preaching*. 3rd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.

message by repeating key terms, such as justice, persistence, faith, and prayer, as well as through the use of images.

Another way I make the central message of the sermon known to the listener was by including examples, an explanation of the word "justice" within both the New Testament and modern contexts, as well as a call to action related to justice at the conclusion. The theme of justice is woven throughout the sermon, from the passage to the modern application.

Through the use of a contemporary illustration that describes one woman's persistent journey in advocating for justice, I help the listener hear and mentally visualize the sermon's focus. In an attempt to send the listener home with a firm understanding of what is being asked by the passage, I conclude the sermon by offering a clear, memorable exhortation and a personal invitation to go beyond the surface and answer the call of Christ to pray and seek justice.

- **What did the sermon invite hearers to do in response to the sermon (the function)? How did the sermon make that invitation known to the hearers?**

The Sermon Function, according to Long, is "what the sermon aims to do."[2] My sermon's function is: This sermon encourages and seeks to strengthen the resolve of the oppressed and forlorn, those experiencing injustice and those who stand on their side, reminding them to keep advocating, petitioning, approaching, and crying out to God, who hears their prayers and is the giver of justice, even if it seems slow in coming.

The sermon, more or less, is a call to action, supporting and advocating for those who face injustice. The sermon encourages the listener to adopt an attitude of prayer that challenges them to go beyond a simple or basic prayer and ask for what they can do to be part of the justice-seeking process. This response is best seen at the conclusion of my sermon- I challenge them to think about their prayers and how they should pray, and what they should do once they have prayed.

- **In what way does this sermon participate in the church's larger vocation of forming, transforming, and sustaining people in the Christian faith; that is, how does it invite people to adopt a disposition of heart and mind and practices that are reflective of the gospel?**

One aspect of the sermon that invites people to adopt a disposition of heart and mind, as well as practices reflective of the gospel, can be found in the statements at the end of the sermon. In the conclusion of the sermon, the listener is invited to participate actively in prayer. They are challenged not only to pray for justice but also to be part of the justice-seeking process. They are asked to do what Jesus is calling his disciples to do: to pray and not lose heart. The sermon challenges listeners to move beyond "set it and forget it prayers" and to move towards being active participants in prayer, responding to what God challenges them to do as a result of their prayers. Not just praying and then moving on, but to be active in the world.

- **What were the major strengths of this sermon?**

One of the strengths of my sermon is evident in its contemporary application. By connecting to someone who was persistent in today's context, while the story may not be considered an experience that would happen to everyone, the story of Ms. Danielle Brown helped the listener see a modern example of persistence. The audience was able to see what this may look like today. I believe that this example not only humanizes the parable- it gives it a face, a name, thereby making it relatable. In addition to connecting the parable to the modern example

of Ms. Brown, other references to current global and systemic injustices, such as those in Palestine, Ukraine, and ICE raids, help the listener also connect this biblical passage with current realities, emphasizing that God's justice is not something that is abstract but lived and experienced today, here and now.

A second strength of my sermon was the conclusion, where I invited the listener to move beyond "set it and forget it prayers" and that when we pray about injustice, we are signing up to be a part of that justice-seeking process. In an attempt to express that prayer and justice are inseparable, I wrote the line, "Prayer is both petition and participation." These inseparable concepts invite the listener to engage in practices that are both practical and profound.

A third area of strength within my sermon is its theological/biblical foundation. The sermon identifies the key theological themes of justice, persistence, faith, and prayer, and weaves them throughout the sermon. Within the exegesis section, a foundation is established in historical and literary contexts. The analysis of the Greek terms attempts to add depth by distinguishing the differences between vindication and compassion.

A final strength of my sermon is the balanced tone that combines pastoral and prophetic elements. Within the sermon, I blend compassion and empathy with conviction and prophetic challenge. By acknowledging that "Do not lose heart sounds comforting on a pillow, but is difficult in practice", I express it in a way that is both empathy and realism. In doing this, I prevent the sermon from sounding moralistic or naïve.

- **What weaknesses or growing edges (opportunities for continued growth) do you perceive?**

One opportunity for growth in this sermon would be to weave the story of the widow and my life example further into the sermon, connecting it to the text in a way that helps us understand the text more concretely and its meaning. I do provide the examples, but I could be more direct in the connection by making statements such as "as it relates to our parable today, justice may look like…" and provide additional details. Also, while I highlight what the word "justice" means in both its New Testament context and its modern context, another area of opportunity would be to provide additional details on what the justice system looks like —past and present —and why justice was not as accessible then and now. In the opening, I ask, "What does justice look like?" without fully addressing the answer to the question later in the sermon.

A second weakness can be found in my conclusion. While I do call them to action, I don't provide specifics. Sometimes listeners want to figure out those details for themselves, while others are interested in hearing about more concrete ways to implement the calling of Scripture. I could provide more tangible ways for the audience to exercise their faith in their everyday lives.

Another area that presents an opportunity for improvement is seen in transitions. To save time, some of the transitions were shortened and appear abrupt. For example, the movement from the modern illustration of Ms. Brown into the exegesis feels somewhat abrupt. The tone is also more academic rather than pastoral/sermonic. I cut details that may have softened the transition.

Lastly, in reflecting on my sermon, the focus on justice overshadows the text's discussion on prayer. There could be a more balanced approach between justice and prayer. Perhaps I could link justice more directly and concretely to the act and discipline of prayer, as Jesus discusses in the passage. Another area that could be strengthened is the sermon's Christocentric

Connections. While discussing this sermon, I also mention Jesus' teachings as well as God's justice, and I could further highlight how Christ embodies justice.

- **How will you address the areas of needed growth and improvement?**

To address the first opportunity for growth, which surrounds helping the listener to understand the text more concretely and its meaning, I would work to weave the parable more thoroughly throughout the sermon. This could be done by providing additional details, such as more information about the experiences within the first century. This exploration could be done more fully in my exegesis portion of the sermon. Here, I could discuss studies/information about the narrative of the persistent widow and share those details. I could provide details about the everyday New Testament world experiences of woman and why this story is a powerful shift in those experiences.

To address the second opportunity for growth, which surrounds transitions, I can connect the sections more concretely. Instead of a brief sentence that connects them, I would connect the threads of the modern example to the parable and then into the exegesis before wrapping up with the conclusion. Each section would be connected to the previous one, so that it forms a more cohesive narrative.

The final area of growth that could be addressed more surrounds the overshadowing of prayer with justice. While the parable is about an unjust judge and a widow seeking justice, the other major component is why this parable is being taught. The aspects of why it is being shared are overshadowed by the concept of justice. I would emphasize less about justice and share more information about prayer and how that connects to justice. If I were to use this sermon as the foundation for a longer sermon, I would leave the previous work essentially unchanged and enhance the connections and importance of prayer. I would emphasize prayer more heavily, as Jesus states that the reason for the parable is more about prayer than and what we are to do as we wait.

- **To what do you want to devote more time and attention for future sermons?**

In future sermons, I would like to devote more attention to transitions- working to create a more unified sermon that is not as abrupt in moving from one point to the next. I want to give more attention to building up those transitions so that the delivery is smoother. I would devote more time to being mindful of what I cut out of my sermon so that it does not appear to be abrupt when I move between each of the points within the sermon.

Another area that I would like to devote more time to is exegesis. When completing exegesis, digging deeper into the "whys" of a particular passage will be helpful not only in understanding but also in preparing for a sermon. If the passage is from the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures, it may be beneficial to understand why a prophet made a specific statement or called out a particular leader. Flushing out more details in these situations will better inform my sermons.

I would also like to devote more time to weaving stories and life applications more effectively in future sermons. I enjoy providing tangible ways to apply our faith at the end of a sermon, and it can be an effective way for people to engage with Scripture. The takeaway can be simple — prayer, or it can be more involved — volunteering. It could be to invite them to consider a particular topic in a new light. Regardless of what the "ask" is at the end of the sermon, I would like to devote more time to it in the sermon delivery, as well as in thinking

about it. I want to dedicate more time to mindfully thinking about the takeaway in a way that helps to challenge not only my audience, but also myself.