

Sunday 19th October 2025; Benefice Holy Communion,
Ampleforth.

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.”

At the Historical Society talk on Tuesday I spoke about the lives of the northern saints from Paulinus to Cedd who were all instrumental in bringing the Christian faith to this area. Although seemingly different in many ways, and from differing backgrounds, they all had one thing in common – prayer was the priority in their lives. St Oswald prayed before the battle of Heavenfield, where he won against overwhelming odds, Hilda and Wilfred prayed for a right outcome at the Synod of Whitby which decided the direction of Christianity in this area and across the country. Cuthbert prayed in solitude at his hermitage on the Farne Islands and was cared for by the otters. Cedd prayed to cleanse the area of evil influences before establishing his monastery at Lastingham which continues today as a holy site and place of pilgrimage. For those who serve at the monastic communities in this area today at Ampleforth Abbey, Stanbrook Abbey and St Hilda’s at Whitby, prayer is the first priority of the day.

In the story today, we read about a judge who neither fears God nor has any respect for people, and a widowed woman who is desperate for justice pesters him in her cry for justice, so much that the judge finally relents. “And will not God,” Jesus concludes, “grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?” in other words, God is not an unjust judge but loves this world so much that he gave his only Son, who came to not judge the world but to save it.

Jesus told this parable to his disciples to encourage them to pray always and not to lose heart, because even they were not praying always, and would grow discouraged. It happens to everyone; the great saints, and lowly sinners, you, me. We all struggle with prayer, and we all get discouraged in life. So, what can we do about it?

Significantly, Jesus implies that praying is always connected to not

losing heart. Why? Because when we give up on prayer, we inevitably lose

heart. And when we lose heart, we often give up on prayer. So maybe this would be better translated as: “Pray always so you don’t lose heart.” He doesn’t mean that we should pray every second of every day, but simply that we should not ever give up on prayer or give up on God. No matter how discouraging our life gets, no matter how long it seems to take for God to answer our prayers, we should not ever give up on God, to trust, have faith, to pray always so that we do not lose heart.

Even if we still believe that there’s something in it, we can sometimes get out of the habit of prayer, because we do not prioritize it, choosing to be doing something about an issue rather than praying about it. Life keeps us so busy, leaving out time for prayer and when we try to quiet ourselves for prayer, life comes at us with everything it has to try and distracts us.

But you when we don’t pray, according to Jesus, we lose heart, and we get discouraged, because our souls need prayer. Without it, they will suffer pain or even shrivel up. Like our bodies and minds, our souls need care, and the best way to care for our souls is to pray and spend time with God. Otherwise, we lose heart, we get discouraged, life becomes too great a burden to bear. How often do we hear of someone do everything, and then when all efforts fail, they cry out, ‘God help me!’? Prayer is how we remind ourselves that God is with us, involved in our life, and in our world. Prayer helps us to see God at work around us and within us.

At the end of today’s reading, Jesus asks us a simple question: When the son of man comes, will he find faith on earth? In other words, when Jesus returns, will he find people praying who have not given up on God? If so, he will also have found people who have not grown weary and discouraged by life, because they have continued to see God at work. They have not given up on prayer so may we be among them, people who learned to pray always, and not

lose heart.

Thanks be to God. Amen.