

For example, we often assume that the woman's cause is just. That is, that she has been wronged in the earlier judgment. But looking at the Greek, we find that she is seeking vengeance. That can give us pause to consider that the original judgment was correct, from a legal perspective, even as it was "unjust" from her perspective.

We have seen this kind of attitude recently: if the jury's or the judge's decision does not comport with what we believe the outcome should be we sometimes say the judgment was unjust. Riots have occurred in this country in the last several years when a judge or jury has come to one conclusion and some people respond to that decision with looting and rioting. This is not to say that a judge or jury can't make an incorrect decision; it is a reminder, though, that the appeals process and our legal system seek to lessen the likelihood of that happening.

Also of interest when we look to the Greek is that the widow was seeking to embarrass or humiliate the judge and even threatened to blacken his eye. Ok, how does your view of the widow change if you consider that she was threatening physical and social harm to the judge because she didn't get the verdict she wanted? Maybe the judge was simply protecting himself by changing the decision although if that was true, then it raises other issues about whether the judge might be corrupt in the sense of making decisions which benefit his well-being even as they do not comport with the law of that time.

We also have absolutely no information about the nature of the legal dispute or the widow's opponent. But if we think about the widow seeking vengeance rather than justice, consider the pain that is now going to be inflicted on the opponent because the widow persisted until the judge changed the verdict. What is injustice now?

All of this is a reminder to us that the parables of Jesus are not simple, one-dimensional moral or ethical tales. Parables are short stories that were intended by Jesus to cause his audience to sit up and take note. To stop and reflect and discern on where and how Jesus was calling them – and us- to pay attention to our presuppositions, our prejudices, our assumptions and our stereotypes. Words matter. And reflection and discernment around the words of Jesus, especially, matter as we learn and strive to live into the two great commandments.

This parable is one that is especially relevant as we wind down the time until our national election. The level of vitriol flung at and between the candidates ought to make all of us ashamed, regardless of which candidate or which party we support. This election cycle has certainly been an example of failing to uphold the dignity and honor of every human being. I hope you will join us here at St. John's on Monday, November 7th from 5-7p for "Light a Candle; Pray for our Nation"- a time of quiet, prayers and candlelight as we move into Election Day.

"Jesus forces us to find a moral compass" according to Amy-Jill Levine. Jesus asks us to question our own assumptions when we come face-to-face with situations that appear to us as unjust and which deny others respect. Jesus pleads with us to love God and love neighbor as the baseline upon which our lives are measured. "Jesus was invested in fairness, reconciliation and compassion" so how can we do less than work for a world where all are treated fairly, where hurts are dealt with compassionately and where we seek reconciliation from wounds inflicted.

The Gospel begins with Jesus reminding us to pray always and not to lose heart. At Bible Study this last week, we were reminded that prayer is sometimes not about changing God but rather about changing ourselves. Pray always and do not lose heart. Even as we continue to see injustice in the world, hold up your prayers for peace and reconciliation and fairness. Be persistent and speak out when you see something or someone that denies dignity to another. Be alert to your presuppositions and prejudices that may influence how you respond to others around you. And do not lose heart. God is with us, always and to the end of the world. **Amen.**