

## Persist

16 10 16

Grant, we beseech you, most merciful Lord,  
to your faithful people pardon and peace,  
that they may be cleansed from all their sins  
and serve you with a quiet mind  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

Our text may be found in the epistle for today, Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, chapter 4 and part of verse 2:

**‘ . . . be persistent . . . ’**

Are you ? Are you persistent ? Have you a reputation for not giving up, for getting things done ? Do you put in the necessary time and effort to guarantee that you finish what you start, that once you get the bit between your teeth, you won't let go, give up, until the job is done ?

Certainly, persistence, being persistence is part of Paul's advice, here, today, to his spiritual son, Timothy, part of his teaching to the Church. It contains two wonderful, defining verses on scripture which I learnt as a boy and is a useful keynote for Bible Sunday next week: **‘All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.’**

Certainly, persistence is the underlying, informing principle, appropriate for what has to be done in the time we have to do it, i.e. to pass on an authentic, genuine belief in God the Father and in God the Son and in God the Holy Spirit. And this notion of persistence was the motto of my theological college. On the wall of the refectory was the College's coat of arms, underneath which was written: 'Be right and persist'.

Good advice which Jesus illustrates in today's passage from Luke's gospel – the parable of the Unjust Judge. I must admit the description of the judge is fairly shocking: a man who 'neither feared God nor had respect for people'. I guess, nowadays, it is no surprise if people disrespect God but surely a judge should respect people? The word 'fear' in this instance – God-fearing – is curious. In the Greek, the word is φοβέω (phobeo) from which I guess we get the word phobia. The real, actual presence of God is truly awesome – to Moses on Mount Sinai, to Elijah on Mount Horeb, to Isaiah in the Temple in Jerusalem. Experience of the overwhelming presence of God, his might and majesty, purity and beauty, could be profoundly disturbing. But the essential idea that underpins the notion of the fear of God, of being God-fearing, is respect – a proper due deference to and respect of the reality of the divine in our lives. Holy fear, reverent fear, is according to the Book of Proverbs the beginning of wisdom. And proper respect is surely at the heart of a well-informed society. But this unjust judge neither respects God nor Man.

And he doesn't respect this poor widow who comes to him seeking justice. And what in the end gets her justice is not the principle of justice that should inform

any practising judge but her persistence. I love the honesty of the unjust judge who comes to the conclusion that he will see justice done not because that is the right thing to do but because, if he doesn't, he will be worn down by the widow's persistence !

So let me end this morning, as I began, by asking the question - are you persistent ? Are you persistent in the things that truly matter: the love of God and the love of neighbour as you love yourself ?

Well what do you think ?

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*The United Benefice of Great Torrington, Devon*

*16<sup>th</sup> October 2016*

G: Sermons 34 :Persist

