

I wonder whether we can see the widows persistence as God's persistence for us. Our temptation is to think of faith, that is perseverance whether under trial or not, as something we do to earn God's approval, to keep in God's good books, especially that final book which weighs up all our good deeds versus the bad ones- a sort of faith promulgated by fear of losing favour, a faith that catches us out rather than confirms God's love for us. And we don't have far to look to find that God's love for us is total – it's the whole meaning of Christ, given to be one like us in all things but sin and so able to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves – my constant refrain- the sign of God's faith in us as worth saving. The Resurrection then as a sign of God's persistence in loving us, of God's continued presence with us whatever we might do to the contrary except to deny it. The widow then takes God's part in arguing for justice - not the justice of our good deeds but the justice of God's graceful love which conquers all. The unjust judge then represents all those who deny this possibility, who have no fear of God, who do not see that in Christ mercy always trumps sacrifice, who are deaf to God's love. The preacher's task in this setting, as we hear in Paul's second letter to Timothy, is to "*refute*" this '*falsehood, correct error, call to obedience – but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching*'. We do this through parable and story and hopefully one's own life; the story of one's life and stories such as that of Moses and the Amalekites, defeated by Moses' persistence in prayer, and not without help, God's help provided through the ministry of Aaron and Hur supporting his arms, one on one side one on the other – the trio emblematic of God, of our cooperation in God's one work of love; our perseverance which reveals both our love for God and God's love for us or, in the words of St Augustine:

*“Hence the apostles saying “ Let your requests be made known before God” must not be taken as though they become known to God, who undoubtedly knew them before they were made; but that they become known to us in the sight of God as we practise forbearance....”*  
(O&R week 29 Monday)

- as we practise love. So it's to adopt a mindset in which everything speaks of God and this becomes a just judgement justified in the sight of God. Or in the words of the seventeenth century poet Thomas Traherne describing his gift of mystical insight given at birth:

*“How like an angel came I down!  
How bright are all things here.  
When first among his works I did appear.  
O how their glory did me crown!  
The world resembled his ETERNITY,  
In which my soul did walk  
and everything that I did see  
Did with me talk.”* (Dies natalis)

To walk in the world in this way is of course painful because we see all around us the consequences of it's denial. It calls for perseverance, that is our faith in God's faith in us – a source of wonder indeed.

Br John Mayhead

Monastery of Christ Our Saviour