

Sermon 37: The Centurion's Faith and Christ's Mercy: Luke 7:1-10

Text: Luke 7:1-10 “Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick...”

Summary: Christ's interaction with a Roman Centurion in Capernaum gives us insight into His authority, compassion, and our common misunderstanding of His ways.

Proposition: God wants us to rest in His power and glory in His mercy in the new year.

Introduction:

- The following passage serves an important function in Luke's presentation of Christ to Theophilus.
- In **Luke 7-8**, he related several miracles and conversations that should have strengthened his conviction in the “certainty of those things, wherein he had been instructed...”

- These interactions were meant to re-enforce the words of Simeon recorded in **Luke 2** that Christ is God’s “salvation, Which He has prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel...”
- Luke took meticulous care to encourage a Gentile, Theophilus, that not only is the gospel true, but it’s also for him.
- As we look at these details, I think his intent will become more apparent.

Section 1: A man’s dear friend is sick: 7:1-2 “Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die...”

- **What was going on?**
 - **A man’s servant was very sick even to the point of death: Matthew 8:6** “Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented...”
 - He was paralyzed and the implication is that he may have had a horrible accident that left him maimed and at the point of death.
 - People were well accustomed with death and as a soldier, he would have seen people die from horrific injuries.
- **What do we know about this servant?**
 - **He was described in two different ways:**
 - **His status in Roman society:** Luke calls him a (*doulas*/servant in bonds)
 - **His relationship to his master:** When the Centurion’s friends referred to the servant, in both the Matthew and Luke passages, the *doulos* is called a *paidos* (This was a term of endearment that was used of someone who was like a son to you.)
- **Why was this problem so significant?**

- **In some ways there was nothing unusual about someone getting sick or injured to the point of death. This is a very ordinary human occurrence.**
- **In other ways this is extremely unusual:**
- **The man who appealed to Christ was not a Jew but rather a Gentile.**
- **He wasn't just any Gentile; he was a Roman Centurian:**
 - **Wealthy** (he was paid the same salary as the hundred men he led)
 - **Bold:** probably a military hero who had distinguished himself in combat.
 - **Harsh peers:** His peers were known to be harsh people.
 - **A Master:** Often servants would have been spoils of war.
- **He was an unlikely person to be loved by the Jews.**
- **He was an unlikely person to be known for his kindness to his servants.**
- **He was an unlikely person to come to Christ or have His attention.**
- **His man's story would have resonated with Theophilus, a Gentile.**

Section 2: A humble appeal for mercy: 7:3 “And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant...”

- **Some important details:**
 - **He didn't go directly to Christ:**
 - He sent Jewish representatives who might cause Christ to consider him.
 - He sent close friends when Christ began to come to his home.
 - **He asked Christ not to come into his house.**
 - **Jews generally didn't have personal interaction with Gentiles: John 4:9** “Then saith the woman of Samaria

unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans...”

- **His request had three simple qualities:**
 - It was made from a position of unworthiness.
 - It was made with a conviction of Christ’s rightful authority.
 - It was made with an appeal to Christ’s mercy:
- **Lamentations 3:22-25** “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD...”
- **Psalms 86:3-8** “Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works...”
- **Psalms 103:13-14** “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust...”

Section 3: A contrast of worldviews: 7:4-8 “And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord,

trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it...”

- **The religious leaders: 7:4-5** “They besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.
 - **“He is worthy...”**
 - “He loveth our nation...”
 - “He hath built us a synagogue...”
 - **They attempted to establish a basis to prove entitlement to favor.**
- **The centurion: 7:6-7** “Trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee...”
 - **“I am unworthy...”**
 - “The centurion sent friends...”
 - “Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof...”
 - “Neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee...”
 - **He made no attempt to establish a basis to prove his entitlement to favor.**
- **The point of the matter:**
 - One believed that God was indebted to them while the other saw that God owed him nothing.
 - One attempted to build a case in his defense, the other saw there was no case to be made.
 - One believed they could manipulate God, the other saw their only hope was the sheer mercy of God.

Section 4: Christ's response: 7:9-10 "When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick..."

- **What He did:**
 - He commended the man's faith to the people.
 - He graciously healed the man's servant.
 - He never stated why He healed the centurion's servant.
- **Why it matters:**
 - It shows us that God is no respecter of persons.
 - It shows us how He cares for the unlikely.
 - It shows us what genuine faith looks like.
 - It demonstrates His authority and leaves us a compelling reason to trust in Him.
 - It demonstrates that He is a God of mercy!

Application:

- **We need to ask ourselves which worldview most represents our own.**
- **In this coming year, we may need to rekindle that conviction that...**
 - We are unworthy.
 - He has the right to rule as He sees fit.
 - We must rest in His power and goodness.
 - We must humbly appeal to His mercy and glory in His daily kindness.
 - There is a compelling reason to trust Christ, not only with eternity, but also today!
- **May God give us a renewed sense of His power and kindness, and may we live in the light of this power and kindness in the new year!**