

CENTURION'S SERVANT

Date: March 18, 2020

Scripture: Luke 7:1-10; Matthew 8:5-13

Hi, I'm Tonya Annis and I am the 1825 ministry director and today we are going to be looking at the miracle of Jesus found in Matthew 8:5-13 as well as in Luke 7:1-10. Hear the word of God from the gospel of Luke

7 After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ² Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. ³ When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." ⁶ And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. ⁷ Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸ For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰ And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

Luke 7:1-10

This passage comes right after Jesus's teachings, His verbal instructions to His disciples regarding how to be His disciple. He has taught them with words what it means to

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follow Him. Now, Jesus is going to teach them by example what it takes to be His disciple.

Jesus enters Capernaum, a small fishing village near the Sea of Galilee. This is where Jesus spent much of His time and performed many of His miracles. We learn that in Capernaum there is a centurion who has a need. Centurions were Roman Army officials, officers, who generally commanded 100 soldiers. Most centurions were gentiles or Samaritans. As non-Jews and as representatives of their oppressors, Jewish people tended to despise centurions.

This particular centurion had a servant who was highly valued by him and so gravely ill that it stirred the centurion to act on his servant's behalf. What does the servant have that is so bad? We don't know. We aren't told. But whatever it is, the same story as told by Matthew in chapter eight, verse six indicates that the sickness caused paralysis and great torment. Generally, paralysis means you have no feeling, but this servant was paralyzed and in pain. He had the worst of both worlds.

The centurion is moved with compassion for his servant, he hears that Jesus is in town and sends people to ask Jesus to heal his servant. Such compassion for a servant was unheard of at the time of Jesus. In the telling of this story in Matthew, it says that the centurion came to see Jesus himself. But in Jewish culture, when a man of authority sends someone else for him as a representative, it is as if they themselves are coming. The centurion sends elders of the Jews as his representatives.

The fact that the centurion sends Jewish elders is also unusual for a man in his position. The elders of the Jews were among the spiritual leaders of Israel. They would rarely submit to a Roman Army official. But here, they do exactly what the

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centurion asks and they do it quickly. This speaks to the centurion's character and to the fact that he had a good relationship with those he ruled.

So, Jesus, a distinguished Jewish Rabbi comes to town and so as not to offend Him, the centurion sends the Jewish elders to ask a favor of Him. The Jewish elders explain why Jesus should heal the centurion's servant. Jesus responds and goes with them towards the centurion's home.

What happens next leads to Jesus marveling at the faith of this man. Jesus praises him for having great faith. He says He hasn't found such great faith in all of Israel. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Faith is confidence and persuasion in something God has said. Great faith has nothing to do with the size of your faith. Rather, it's about the difficult truths you believe.

This non-Jew, Roman representative believed in the power of Jesus. He was confident in Christ. He believed in the authority of Jesus. He likened Jesus to a military commander as he explained that he knew whatever Jesus commanded would be done. He knew that the words of Jesus were sufficient to accomplish the healing even without Jesus coming face to face with his sick servant.

Like the 12 who walked with Jesus, we are given this picture, this display of faith to point us to what it looks like to be a disciple of Christ. We have promises in Scripture that Christ will make us more and more like Himself. He tells us that He will never leave us, never forsake us. He says that He will provide for all our needs. He tells us that getting the Word of God into our lives will wash us and transform us into His likeness. That His Word is sufficient. He tells us that He has given us everything we

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need for life everlasting. In John 11:25 Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."

Some of these are hard truths to believe. But the centurion showed great faith because he believed in the power and authority of Jesus to do exactly what He said He would do. The centurion believed that Christ's word was sufficient. The centurion's faith in Jesus's authority proves to be well placed when Jesus heals his slave without ever visiting his home

Faith must be based on the promise of God and faith grows the more you understand and believe what God says. Make our prayer today be like the prayer of the man in Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."

Almighty God, as we prepare our hearts to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, we confess that we often struggle to believe that when Jesus spoke the words, "It is finished." that it counted for us. Father God, so often we focus on our brokenness, on our needs, on our own strength, that we neglect to live in the truth that You sent Your son to live and to die so that we may live in relationship with You simply because You love us. Lord, may we too be like the centurion. May we cling tight to Your promises and may we put our trust in Your Word. May we believe that when Jesus said, "It is finished." it counted for us. And because of that, may we give You glory in every circumstance. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.