

Impressed by Modest Faith — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 8:5–13 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, August 9, 2026 • What Man Is This?

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Amen. Well, thanks to the team for leading us in worship. It was an awesome time. Thank you for singing. If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 8. Somebody wanted to clap — that's fine. You can clap, too. But we do appreciate our team. They're really faithful to lead us week in and week out.

In Matthew chapter 8, we are going to be continuing a new series we started last week. We've been in the Book of Matthew for over a year or so now, and the last several months we've been looking at Jesus up on the mountain teaching the Sermon on the Mount. We've been trying to explore who is this man, who is Jesus, what did he have to say.

And this series is focused not so much on what he had to say, but more so what he had to do, and the encounters that he has with these various different individuals reveal a lot about who he is, his character, why he came, and what his mission was really about. You probably know that you never have to teach a kid the value of making a good impression.

They learn it at a very, very young age. I remember when my firstborn had his very first steps, just how exciting a day that was. And looking back on it, if someone would've filmed me, I would be very embarrassed by the faces that I made and the sounds that I made. You look absolutely ridiculous, but you're just so excited.

It's like the biggest thing ever. And I think kids pick up on that and they're like, "I know how to get a rise out of Mom and Dad, and so I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that." And it only gets worse, right? As you get older, the need to make a good impression gets stronger and stronger, because there's value to making a good impression in front of the right people.

And that thing doesn't go away. The older you get, the stronger it gets, and the more weight a person's opinion begins to have in your life. And so it goes from, like, the report cards to job applications, and then from job applications to things even beyond that. And so it shapes the things that you say.

It shapes the friends that you develop. It shapes the things that you put on your social media profiles. And it really begins to shape your own psychology. Your own self-understanding becomes fundamentally shaped by the opinions that other people have about you. And for you, the thing that matters more than anything is that you make a really good impression for the right people — that the right people think the right things about you.

And that can begin to cause some problems in life if you're not careful, and it can drive you into a ditch. I would call these two different ditches. They're really caused by the same thing, but they look fundamentally different. The one ditch is that it can drive you into a place of arrogant self-exaltation, where you are impressive.

Let's just admit it — you know, you're an impressive person, and people are impressed by you, and so they say so, and you start to drink the Kool-Aid, and you kind of puff up, and you become one of those people. And we all know what those people are. And you don't even see it in yourself.

Everyone else can see it about you, but you're just kind of arrogant and exalted. And then the other type of ditch is the opposite of that. It is this self-denigration, the self-humiliation. You walk around: "Nobody likes me. Everybody hates me. I might as well go home." And you just — you don't hate yourself, you know, there's self-loathing, criticism all the time. And maybe you don't say it exactly like that, but when you look in the mirror, there's nothing good to see there from your point of view.

And it's because you've allowed the opinion of other people to have such great power over you, and you've been so discouraged by what you've been unable to do that you land in this ditch of total despair. And even though it doesn't sound like it, both of those ditches are caused by the same thing. It's a vice the Bible calls pride. And you may think it's not a prideful thing to think lowly of yourself, but it actually is, because you're obsessed with how lowly you are.

And pride, at the end of the day, is just a self-obsession. Whether positively or negatively, it's an obsession with the self. As C.S. Lewis beautifully said of humility: it isn't thinking more or less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. Thinking of yourself less often. And so when it comes to making a good impression, it's a given —

we want to make a good impression for the right person. The question we need to answer is whose opinion really matters, and whose opinion matters the most? And the reality is there's one person whose opinion matters more than every other opinion, and that, of course, is the maker of your soul. It's your creator.

It's the one for whom you were made. And the counterintuitive claim that I want to try to show you this morning is that what impresses the Lord is not the same thing that impresses every other person in your life. Most of the people that you try to impress in your life, it

requires you to do some form of self-exaltation, some form of showing how great you are and what you can do.

Whereas when it comes to impressing the Lord, as we're going to see in this passage, nothing could be further from the truth. It's not through self-humiliation, it's not through self-denigration, but it's actually through something that's in between, or that's neither of those two extremes.

And what's so fascinating about our passage is that the person who gets that idea of what it means to be impressive to the Lord is someone who should not have gotten it. It's someone who should have been unaware. It was a pagan Roman soldier, who in his own right was a very impressive person, but who learned that when it comes to impressing the Lord, I'm not going to lead with what's great about me, but rather I'm going to point to what's great about Him.

And so Jesus, last week we saw, was willing to do what other people wouldn't do. This week, we're going to see that Jesus is impressed by things that other people are not impressed by — that what impresses Jesus is modesty and great faith. What impresses Jesus is modest people with great faith. Now, we're going to have to answer what does it mean to be modest, and our passage is going to help us with that, and then we need to try to get an answer to what does it mean to have faith, and what does it mean for your faith to be great?

Because in our culture, the definition that most people have of faith is wrong. It is unbiblical. It is not the same thing that Jesus describes when he talks about faith. And so Matthew chapter 8: Jesus has finished the Sermon on the Mount. The first person that he encounters in Matthew's telling is this leper.

He cleanses him. He touches the untouchable person, cleanses him of his leprosy, and now he's going to interact with this Roman centurion. And so it says in chapter 8, verse 5, that when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him and began pleading with him: "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in terrible agony."

And Jesus questions him, "Am I to come and heal him?" "Lord," the centurion replied, "I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, having soldiers under my command. I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes. I say to another one, 'Come,' and he comes.

And then I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." Hearing this, Jesus was amazed, and he said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with so great a faith. I tell you that many will come from east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

And then Jesus told the centurion, "Go. As you have believed, let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that very moment. And what's so fascinating about this passage is it's another miracle story, but just like last week, the focus of Matthew is not on the miracle. You know that because the centurion coming and going is on the periphery of the passage. He comes in verse one, goes at the end. His servant is healed almost like an afterthought in the second half of the last verse. The vast majority of Matthew's attention is on the conversation that takes place between the centurion and Jesus, and centers on the amazement of Jesus at the faith of this centurion and his indictment on Israel for their lack of faith.

And so when you read the Bible, you want to try to focus on the things that the author you're reading focuses on, and in this case, he is focused on this guy's amazing faith. And it's hard to appreciate what Jesus says and what he does without understanding the first-century context. A centurion in that culture was a Roman officer, high-ranking in the Roman army.

Most centurions oversaw around 80 or so soldiers, even though the word in Latin means 100. Maybe they used to oversee 100, but they did about 80 people, and they got to their position through pure greatness. Okay? This was not a political appointee. This was not some politico doing favors and putting someone in a position.

This is Russell Crowe, Gladiator-level awesome, all right? This is someone who has earned his stripes. He has the respect of his peers. He is a man's man. He is a great man. And he would have been loathed and hated by the Jewish establishment. Most Jewish people didn't like Romans in general because they were Gentiles, and most Jewish people really didn't like Roman soldiers because they were working for an occupying army, and they really, really hated high-ranking Roman soldiers like centurions, because they would wield their power — you know, they were very powerful.

Yet in this case, not only does this man, who has in his own right a very impressive resume, come to Jesus not swinging that resume — he comes lowly, humbly, and pleading with Jesus: "Would you please heal my servant?" Now, on the one hand, it's not surprising that he has a servant. Most Roman centurions were not allowed to marry, for, you know, good reasons —

they didn't want them dealing with this thing called love, where you make dumb mistakes. And so they wouldn't let those high-ranking people marry, and so they would hire servants to kind of take care of things at the house. And the word translated servant is that it was a young boy who would do those kinds of things.

But for whatever reason, this guy was uniquely precious to this centurion. And Matthew doesn't show us this, but if you read this same story in Luke's gospel, you get a little bit of added insight on why this guy was so precious and how this conversation between Jesus and the centurion transpired.

And so in Luke chapter seven — it's the first encounter that Jesus has coming down from the mountain, so Luke tells it a little differently than Matthew — it says that a servant who was highly valued by the centurion was sick and about to die. And when the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, requesting that Jesus would come and save the life of his servant.

And so right away, you see a little bit of a difference between the way Matthew's telling it and the way Luke's telling it. Namely, Luke points out that this servant was highly precious to the centurion, which was weird. Most centurions would just let their servant die and get a new one. It's, you know, your property — you do what you want to do.

This guy had some kind of affection for this servant, and he also sends Jewish elders as an intermediary between the centurion and Jesus. And the reason that he did that, again, is because Roman centurions were very hated or loathed or seen as unclean by Jewish rabbis.

It was something about the abortion and infanticide that the Romans would commit in their homes — practicing Jews would see going into their home as a form of defilement, and so they would just stay away. And so he's leveraging his relationships with these Jewish elders.

He's essentially saying, "I've done you a favor, now I want you to do me a favor." And so they come to Jesus trying to pull this favor, and the way that they talk to Jesus is: "This guy's worthy. He's an exception to the rule, Jesus, because he's given us a lot of money. He's given us some favors."

Look at what it says: they pleaded with Jesus earnestly — "He's worthy for you to grant this, because he loves our nation and has built us a synagogue." Now, again, in the first century, very common for high-ranking people to do favors for one another. If you do someone a favor, then they owe you.

So this guy has used his position and his wealth to keep the religious establishment in Capernaum at bay. He's built them a synagogue, but now he's heard about the stories. He's seen maybe firsthand what Jesus can do, and he knows that Jesus can heal my servant if I ask him. And so he comes to Jesus pleading, respecting the cultural rules:

"I know that I can't approach him directly. I know that he probably can't come to my house because of the cultural, ceremonial cleanliness laws that they observe. But I'm going to ask him anyway." And when these elders point to his worthiness — when they say to Jesus, "This guy's worthy, so you should do it" — you notice he does not do that.

He actually is quick to say, "No, Jesus, I'm not worthy." But he asks him anyway. And that is what I call modesty. Modesty — the technical definition means to measure rightly. A lot of people think of modesty like not wearing short shorts, or, you know, showing too much skin, and that is one way that we use the word.

But at a strict level, modesty means to measure properly. In fact, in my mind, when girls would wear short shorts at Roby, they would have to put their hands down on their sides, like this, and if their fingertips were past their shorts — too short. All right? And so it is a way of measuring properly. You want to be in right proportion, and that's where the word comes from.

It comes from the Latin word *mode*, which is where we get our English *mode*, like in math. We even have political terms like *moderate* — M-O-D-E, moderate. What does that mean? It means you're neither too far to the left nor too far to the right. You're kind of in the middle.

It's this idea of temperance, you might say — of not being extreme on either side. And in the case of this centurion, the way that that manifests is the way that he sees himself in the mirror. He neither has a highly lofty opinion of himself, but neither does he have an opinion of himself that is so low that he is unable to ask Jesus for help. And that's where a lot of people land — those two ditches that we talked about earlier.

There are people who look to their need, and look to themselves, and they say things like, "Well, I need not ask Jesus, because I can do this on my own. I've got enough. I'm strong enough. I'm smart enough. I can do this." And so they have a lofty opinion of themselves — too high an opinion of themselves. That's not modest.

Others would say, "I'm so unworthy. I'm so unlovable. I'm such a worthless human being. I can't ask Jesus for help. I dare not ask Jesus for help. Why would Jesus love someone like me? Why would he help someone like me?" They become so denigrated and humiliated that they refuse to even ask. But this guy rejects both of those extremes.

He's modest. As Tim Keller likes to say — I always love this quote — the gospel is holding in tension two poles. On the one hand, in Christ, we are far worse off than we could even imagine. In other words, when you really get close to God, it begins to expose in you your sin and your weakness and your arrogance and the things about yourself that you couldn't see before.

When you get close to Jesus, it's just like, "Man, I'm not who I thought I was. I'm way worse than I believed myself to be." So that's on the one hand — you're far worse off than you could have ever imagined. But the other truth of the gospel is that in Christ, you're far more loved than you could ever dare to hope — that God loves you so much that He sent His Son into the world to die on the cross, to pay for your sins, so that when you are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, there is a sense in which your Father desires relationship with you, reconciles you to Himself, loves to give good gifts to His children, desires to bless you and for you to flourish and to experience life as it was meant to be lived.

And so you are far more loved than you could have ever dared to hope. And what's so difficult in the Christian life is learning to hold those truths in tension. But that is modesty. It

is measuring rightly. It is being able to look in the mirror and see the truth about yourself — both truths. That I am not worthy. Yeah. But Jesus, will you help me? Not because of who I am or what I've done or me being deserving in any way whatsoever, but because of who you are.

And so a modest person sees two things rightly. He measures two things rightly. The first thing that he measures rightly is the person in the mirror. When he looks in the mirror, he avoids both ditches — of arrogant self-commendation, but also this kind of negative, critical condemnation. There is a sense in which he sees both truths, not because of who he is, but because of who God is.

In other words, he's not obsessed with himself, but he's able to see himself truly because he's able to see who God is truly, and as a result, he's able to measure properly. I think this is what the Apostle Paul describes when he talks about how when you offer your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of service, then you will be able to discern what is good and pleasing and perfect in the will of God. And here's this centurion who had every reason to be boastful.

He had every reason to kind of say, "Jesus, you know, you have to, because of my power." But he recognizes who he really is in the presence of a great God — and he also recognizes that that great God is a God of love who would be willing to help if I would but ask. And so an arrogant person sees his need and says, "I need not ask."

A self-loathing person sees their need and looks at Jesus and says, "I dare not ask." But a modest person sees themselves and sees their need and says, "I must ask — because only Jesus can help me, and I believe if I ask Him that He will. Not because of who I am, but because of who He is." That's modesty, and it's one of the most important dispositions that you can learn as a Christian. Until you learn this disposition, you will constantly be bouncing between those two ditches of arrogant self-commendation or despairing self-condemnation.

He measures himself rightly. He sees the mirror and he measures truly. He also looks at Jesus and measures Jesus rightly, which is the second thing. He has a proper measurement of the position of a master. And you see this in the way that he describes his role as a centurion in verse nine.

To me, this is the most fascinating part of this passage, even though it's not the main point. He says in verse nine — let's read it again. When Jesus says, "Should I come?", he says, "I know I'm not worthy, but yes, please come." And then he gives the reason why he's asking: "Because I too am a man under authority, having soldiers under my command.

I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes, and I say to another one, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." And so he's giving this analogy about how in his job as

a centurion, he is under authority. But not only is he under authority, he's also in authority over soldiers — again, about 80 soldiers.

And he says, "The reason that my words have such great power is not because of who I am or my tone of voice or how persuasive my arguments may be. The reason that when I say stuff, things happen, is because of the power that's above me. I'm under authority." And Rome — the way that it worked is all power came from the top.

Caesar had absolute power, and your power was only effective insofar as it was channeling his power, and a centurion knew that. Again, remember, a centurion's coming up through the ranks. He started from a very low position, and now he's a high-ranking officer. But it's not his power that he's channeling.

It's the power of the king. It's the power of the Caesar. And so what this centurion is saying is: "I know how this works. I know how authority works. And you are not only a person with authority — you're a person under authority, and you're wielding this ability to heal and to do these things — that is power that comes from God, and you are wielding that authority."

Now, he didn't probably understand the Trinity and all of that stuff, but he rightly understands: your words are effective because of the power that those words represent. And if those words were not backed by that power, then the words would have no effect. But because the words are backed by that power, then sickness, disease, even the paralysis that this servant had — even that is just another soldier under your authority, and if you tell it to go, it's going to go.

And that's such a helpful way for us to think about the lordship of Jesus and the way that authority works. I think you know this intuitively if you just think about it. For example, let's say that you've upset somebody and they threaten to sue you — "You're going to hear from my lawyer!" — but you know deep down they ain't got no lawyer and they're just talking, and so it doesn't really bother you. Why does it not bother you?

Because they don't have the goods. There's no there. But if you're at the doctor and you've had a tumor and you just got a test done and you're really concerned — is this thing cancerous or is it not? — your spouse may have said, "Don't worry, honey, it's probably benign," but it didn't move you.

Or your daughter or your son may have said, "Don't worry, Mom. Don't worry, Dad. It's probably benign," but it didn't move you. That's nice, but it didn't move you. But when your doctor comes in and says, "Hey, I've looked at the exam, I've looked at the test — the tumors are benign," all of a sudden your day is transformed.

Everything is different. Why? It's the same words. The words are the exact same. The difference is this guy is in a position to know. This guy's in a position so that when he says it

matters. And that's what the centurion recognizes about Jesus. "I know what it means to be under authority, and you are wielding the authority of God.

Your power to heal is the power of God. And so I don't need you to come. You don't have to come to my house, because that's not how authority works anyway. You could just say the word, and he would be healed." And so he's a modest person, because he understands that. He has a proper measurement.

Jesus responds to that little sermonette with amazement. It's the only time in the New Testament that Jesus is ever amazed by anybody. He says in verse 10 — and, if you're taking notes: power moves. Power moves whatever's underneath it. The word is powerful because of the authority that it represents.

So Jesus hears all this, and he was amazed, and he said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I've not found anyone in Israel with so great a faith." Now, on the one hand, it's radical that Jesus is talking to this centurion and being nice to him.

That was a scandal in its own right. For Jesus to then use the faith of this centurion to indict Israel — that was over the top. That would be like — oh, I don't know what it would be like. It would be really bad. It would be like someone shaming you with the person that you look at and go, "They ain't nothing."

And then someone says, "They're not only not nothing, they're so something that they're more something than you are." That's what Jesus is in effect doing with Israel and the centurion. And he says that his faith is great. And the fact that he uses the word faith, I think, is really instructive, because when we hear the word faith, a lot of us — what we think of is not what Jesus describes here.

One of my rules in biblical interpretation is that words get their meaning from the context, right? Words get their meaning from the context — not the dictionary, and not your personal experience. And so if you read this word faith in its context, you'll quickly discover that when Jesus talks about faith, he's not talking about strong emotional sentiment, where you kind of project your will onto the world, hoping that something goes a certain way, even though you have no evidence or reason to suggest that it will go that way.

You just feel so strongly that you just faith it into the world. You just force it into the world because of the power of your sincerity. And that is nonsense, right? That is silliness, and that is not what the Bible means when the Bible talks about faith. The way the Bible describes faith — it's not wishful thinking.

It's not sentiment. It's not faith in faith. Faith is measured practically. What do I mean by that? Faith is a conviction that you have that is so deep, so persuasive, so core and fundamental to the way that you see the world, that you assume it to be true even when you

can't see it. Even though you maybe don't have physical evidences to show you that it's true, again, you live as if it's true, because it's been proven true so many times in your life that to believe otherwise, I would need evidence.

That's biblical faith. The Book of Hebrews says, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It's just like I have faith that I'm not going to start floating up here on stage, because I've never floated on stage before. The laws of gravity are such that I'm probably going to stay right here.

I have faith, and you know that I have faith because I'm not wearing a weighted jacket to keep me down here. I'm living as if this is the case. And that's what real faith is. That's what biblical faith is. And it's measured practically — not by what you say, and not by what you feel, or not by what you think.

It really is measured by what you do, by how you live. And this guy is demonstrating faith because he's acting as if Jesus really does have the power to just speak the word. And his analogy — "I say go, and they go. I say come, and they come. I say do this, and he does this" — his analogy is basically saying, "I know, generally, the way the world works, and I live in light of that truth.

And because I believe that to be true, I know you can just say the word." So he's probably heard the stories about Jesus. He's lived in Capernaum, right? He's maybe had eyewitness testimony that Jesus has power to heal. He built the synagogue. We don't know his familiarity with the Old Testament, but maybe he had enough frame of reference and enough evidence to say, "This guy's the Messiah.

This guy's wielding the power of God, and I'm going to live like that's true." And in light of that practical outworking of his faith — that's why his faith was great. That's why it was genuine. And so in your notes, the way that I would think about faith is that faith is something that matches what's been proven. There's not a discrepancy between what your faith is and what the facts are. That's just wishful thinking. A true faith is in alignment with what you know to be the case, and you see him talk about that in verse nine.

The other thing about faith is that it is something that, when it is exercised, God will see and respond to — and in his responding to that guy's faith, his servant was healed. Look again in verse 13. He's amazed by his faith, and then he says, "Go. As you have believed, let it be done for you. And his servant was healed that very moment." Notice the guy has to act on his faith. Again, it's measured practically, and Jesus is saying, "Because your faith is so great, God is going to respond to that faith and demonstrate his power."

Now again, this is another area where people get faith messed up. They think that the power of faith is in the faith itself — almost as if, like, if my faith is big enough and strong enough

and pure enough, then God has to answer my prayer. God has to do something. But that locates the power of faith in you, and that's not the way Jesus describes faith.

That's not the way the Bible describes faith. The power of faith is not in the faith. The power of faith is in that to which the faith points. And so the reason I use the word marshal is not just because it starts with an M. It's actually a beautiful illustration of the way faith works. When you hear the word marshal, you probably think of a high-ranking officer, right?

You can use it as a verb, but as a noun, a marshal is someone who represents the will of the king and gets what the king wants done, done. But originally, this word was a French word that meant horse servant. Did you know that? You can even see it in the word mare, where we get the word for horse, and then chal was the French for servant. Horse servant.

And so this was a dude that worked in the stables with the horses, and he was a lowly nobody. But over time, these people would oversee the cavalry of an army, because they were so good with the horses, and then after that, it came to stand for a very high-ranking officer. But the reason I use the word marshal is because a marshal's authority was never his own authority — just like this centurion's authority was not his authority.

His authority was wielding the authority of Caesar. Just like a marshal, his authority is never his own. It's always delegated power. And so the way that faith works — there's not power in the faith itself. The power of faith is located in that to which it points, just like the power of a marshal isn't his own power, but it is channeling the power of the king.

So when faith does things in your life, the power is not the faith, but God responding to the faith — God's power in response to your faith doing what it does. And so in that way, faith is as powerful as God is. Faith can do literally anything God can do, because the power of faith is not in the faith, but it's in the one to whom it points.

It's in the God who responds to the faith. And so when this guy says, "All you got to do is speak the word," and Jesus says, "Wow, what great faith," he's not saying, "Wow, your faith is so strong. Your faith is so big." He's saying, "You really believe that God is great. You really believe that I am great. You really believe that I'm wielding the authority of God — and so may it be responded to you.

May God respond to you as you believe on him." And that is the way to think about New Testament faith — that the size of my faith doesn't matter. Again, a Tim Keller illustration — can you tell I like Tim Keller? He talks about mountain climbers. He says, imagine two mountain climbers.

One has a really shaky, trembling hand, and one has a really strong hand, and they're both climbing the mountain. And the guy with the really shaky hand grabs onto a really solid rock, and the guy with the really strong grip grabs a loose rock. The guy who's going to be saved is

the guy with the trembling hand — but the salvation doesn't come because of the strength of his hand.

It comes because of the strength of the rock that his hand is on. Whereas the guy with the really strong hand has a really great grip, but he's putting faith in something that is not worthy of his confidence. His faith is in the wrong object, and because the object of his faith is weak, then his faith doesn't have power, because it's wrongly placed.

And that's how the Bible talks about our faith. We can have faith in ourselves, but if you put your faith in yourself, it's like that crumbling little rock. You can put your faith in your money. You can put your faith in any number of things. But Christian faith — amazing faith, faith that Jesus looks at and says, "Wow" — that faith is not so big, so pure, or whatever quality you want to use. It's because it's in the right person. It's in God and in His power, and it actually demonstrates that through the way that it lives. And as a result of that, that faith is what saves you — because you're actually putting your faith in the right person.

Amen. And so faith is measured practically, matches what's been proven, and marshals God's provision. The faith is bringing into existence that which God desires. Now, not only does he say this guy has great faith, he also says, "I've never seen anything like this in Israel," which was an indictment, because Israel had confused what true faith really is.

They had made faith about proximity to goodness, proximity to God. "Because I'm a Jew, I must have faith. Because my parents were related to Abraham, we must have faith." And that was incorrect. That's why John the Baptist in Matthew 3 says, "Don't presume to think because you have Abraham as your father that that's what God wants."

What God wants is fruit in keeping with repentance. God can raise up children of Abraham from these stones. And so when Jesus says, "Not anywhere in Israel have I seen such great faith," he's indicting the religious establishment that had mistaken faith with proximity to Jesus. So he says in verse 11, "I tell you that many will come from east and west to share in the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." So this allusion to the table comes from Isaiah 25. In Isaiah 25, when the Messiah establishes his kingdom, the Bible talks about this big feast that is going to be experienced, and it's going to be a feast with choice meat and aged wine and prime cuts and vintage wine.

It says the same thing twice. But notice that this table is for all the peoples. That's the key phrase. It's for all the peoples. And by the time the first century came around, the Jewish establishment had reserved this table for themselves and no others. Rome can't come, because they're an occupying army.

These Gentiles can't come, because they're ceremonially unclean. The only people who are welcome at the table are people like us — good people, church people, religious people, moral people. It's a table of self-righteousness. It's a table of morality. It's a table of boasting in how good a person you are.

And Jesus basically says, "You have become so deceived in what God wants that you sincerely think He's impressed by your efforts. You sincerely think He's impressed by your religiosity." And the reality is, what He's impressed by is modesty and faith like this centurion. And not only will many people like this centurion be at the table — many of you who assume to be at the table will be cast out, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Because the centurion understands what the table is really about, and the table is not about your moral efforts.

God's table has always been a table of mercy — beginning with Abraham. You notice how he mentions Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Abraham was a pagan from Ur of the Chaldeans, and God sovereignly called him out of that pagan idolatry and said, "If you will go to the place that I'm telling you, I will bless you —

and I'm going to bless the nations through you." And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. In other words, what brought Abraham to the table was not how amazing a guy Abraham was. It was his willingness to trust that God is. And when Abraham failed again and again and again, the only time Abraham was restored back was when he would trust in the mercy of God and in the provision of God to make atonement for his failure. It was through his repentance and faith in God's provision that he remained at the table of mercy.

The table was always a table of mercy — never a table of effort. It was never a table of merit. And this centurion knows that, and the religious establishment forgot. And because they forgot, they were cast out, and the centurion was brought in. And so the absence of modesty, the absence of faith — it matters in your life and in my life, and it doesn't matter a little bit.

It matters a lot. There are eternal implications to you discovering that modesty is what the Lord wants. It's humility. It's not thinking lowly of yourself, as if God could not save you or love you — but neither is it thinking so highly of yourself that you think He's impressed by your religiosity. He isn't.

He's impressed by faith that sees the Lord Jesus and recognizes He is who He said He is. He will do what He said He will do, has done what He said He would do — and that salvation, deliverance, sitting at the table, comes through repentance and faith in Him. And so if you've never had a moment in your life where that understanding came to the fore, and you stopped trying to prove yourself through merit and started resting in God's provision in Jesus, then you will not sit at the table, because the ticket to the table cannot be earned.

And if you're looking to earn your seat at the table, you'll never recline with Abraham. It's only those who recognize the invitation comes by grace through faith. It comes through me recognizing I'm way worse than I could've imagined, but I'm more loved in Jesus than I could have ever dared to hope — and that Jesus has done for me what I could not do for myself. Which is the most amazing thing about this story.

Jesus — even though it was His table — He was cast out into the darkness. Even though Jesus deserved to have people vouch for him — "he's worthy" — he hung on the cross and not a single person vouched. Except for a Roman soldier at the end, who said, "Surely this guy is the Son of God." He was outside the gate, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth, and He did that so that He could stand in our place and pay the penalty for our sin.

And because He absorbed our sin debt, because He made atonement for us, He, in effect, is giving us an invitation to be rightly reconciled to God. Not because we deserve it, but because He was worthy, and He stood in our place. And because He paid the price for our sin, and because God raised Him from the dead, you and I have evidence to believe by faith that it's finished.

We don't have to question it. The evidence is the historical facts of the resurrection. The evidence is the truth of the scripture. The question is, will you live in light of it? Will you be a person who recognizes that God is impressed by the thing that nobody else is impressed by?

He's impressed by you being nothing, by you recognizing Jesus is everything — and that my identity is in Him. And because God's opinion of me is rooted in Christ, it doesn't even matter what these other people say, and I will find peace and contentment and ability to persevere through all hardship, because my identity and my faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has done it.

And so as we enter into a time of invitation, I want to encourage you to respond in light of God's Word. If there's a prayer request or a public decision that you want to make, I'd be happy to receive you here at the front. Otherwise, you have a connection card on the chair in the seat in front of you, and you can indicate a response there as well.

But let's respond to the Lord as He leads, in light of Matthew chapter eight. So Father, we thank You for this time and Your Word. We thank You for this great reminder from an unlikely source — an unlikely person who actually understood what's impressive to You. Forgive us, Lord, where we become just like these religious Pharisees.

We treat people like what's impressive to God is our church attendance or our moral efforts. We exclude people. We judge them. We point the finger. We exalt ourselves. Forgive us. Forgive us for pretending like You're somehow impressed by what everybody else is impressed by. Would You lead us to the cross, where we can be reminded that we are far worse off than we could have ever imagined, but more loved in Jesus than we could hope.

Thank You for Your great love for us. Thank You for sending Jesus to die, to pay the penalty for our sin, and being raised on the third day. Lord, give us, as a church family, faith that is impressive to Jesus — faith that is practical in the way that it works itself out, faith that doesn't point to a strong feeling or sentiment, but faith that responds with obedience and a life of surrender.

And would You continue to use Broadview Baptist Church as a lighthouse in a world of great darkness, where people can see there is a table here of mercy and grace — and that as people come to sit at that table, they would find a community of people who are humble, who are not boastful, who boast in Jesus alone, and as a result, You build Your kingdom right here.

And we pray that this morning, as we respond to Your Word, You would help us to do so with great wisdom, but also courage and a willingness to do the hard thing of walking in obedience. And we pray all of these things in Jesus' name, and God's people said —

[Recording ends during the closing prayer.]