

Sermon Text: Luke 7:1 – 10

Sermon Theme: Do You Have the Faith of a Centurion?

¹When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

“Do you trust me?” This is the question someone asks another person as they tell him or her to fall backward, promising to catch them. “Do you trust me?” This is a question a teenager asks his or her parents as they take the keys to the car. “Do you trust me?” This is a question that spouses ask of one another on a regular basis. God’s Word before us this weekend gives us the opportunity to discuss trust; not the trust between one human being and another; but rather, the trust in Jesus our Savior that God the Holy Spirit has placed into our hearts. We often times refer to this trust as “faith”. We know from the Bible that it is God the Holy Spirit who uses the powerful Word of our God to place in our hearts faith (trust) in Jesus Christ as our one and only Savior from sin. Today we look at an event in the ministry of our Savior, and the question for each of us to answer for ourselves is: Do you have the faith of a centurion?

Jesus had just finished teaching the crowd that was following him, when some leaders of the Jewish people approach him about helping a Roman soldier whose servant was seriously ill and close to death. As we read this account we notice two things: First, the Jewish elders thought that Jesus should help this man because he was such a great person. They said to Jesus, “This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” The second thing that catches our attention is that this Roman soldier didn’t feel worthy of coming to Jesus and asking him for help. We are told, “The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant.” And a little later the centurion sent his friends to tell Jesus why he acted in the way he had, “Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.” Notice that the Holy Spirit had placed a very humble faith in the heart of this Roman soldier.

Not only was the centurion’s faith in Jesus humble, it was also confident. While the Bible does not offer us the details, somehow the centurion had heard about Jesus. Certainly people were talking. They were talking about the things Jesus was teaching. They were talking about the miracles that he was performing. Confident that Jesus had the power to help him, the centurion turned to the Savior to heal his servant. The centurion spoke about the authority and power of Jesus when he said, “But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” This non-Jewish man showed great faith in Jesus. This led the Savior to comment, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” And in the closing verse we read that the One the centurion had faith in, helped him by healing his servant. As we read, “Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.”

Do you have the faith of a centurion? Far too often we will confess that we are like the Jewish leaders in this section of Scripture. When we see a love one sick or suffering, and turn to the Lord for healing, we may say or think, "Lord, this man (or this woman; or this child) deserves to have you do this..." When things aren't going well in our life, we are tempted to think, "Lord, I spend time studying your Word. I am in worship on a regular basis. I live as good a life as I am able to. I deserve to have you help me." When this kind of thinking creeps into our hearts and minds, we do well to remember what the sin we are born in and what the sins that we commit have earned for us. We don't deserve healing. We don't deserve the Savior's love. What we deserve is to have the Savior ignore us and leave us on our own. The end result would be a life that never ends suffering in the fires of hell.

Do you have the faith of a centurion? In all humbleness, moments ago we confessed that we don't deserve to have Jesus help us. You and I confessed our sins and our unworthiness. Using the words of the centurion, each one of us said to Jesus, "I do not deserve to have you come under my roof..." But we also came to Jesus in confidence. You and I came before our Savior confident of his love for you and for me. God the Holy Spirit has placed faith in your heart; faith that turns to Jesus for the healing only he is able to provide. Because of Jesus' love for you, you heard the Good News of the forgiveness of all of your sins. With a humble and confident faith, you and I hear the loving Savior-God say to us the words of Galatians chapter 1 that we read earlier, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father to whom be glory for ever and ever..." And the more time we spend in the Word of our God, the stronger our faith in Jesus our Savior becomes so that we are more and more confident that our Savior, Jesus, is always with us. It is God the Holy Spirit who strengthens the faith that he has placed in our hearts, so that we are confident that the Savior-God is working out all things for our eternal good. It is the God-given gift of faith that leads us to pray to our Father in heaven, confident that he always hears our prayers and that he will answer all our prayers according to his will. It is the first verse of Hebrews chapter 11 that states it so simply and so clearly for us, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Do you have the faith of a centurion? Each one of us will answer that question by first confessing our sin of failing to trust in our Lord at all times. By God's grace each one of us also knows that Jesus our Savior has won forgiveness for all of our sins. Confident of Jesus' love for us, confident of our forgiveness through his perfect life and his innocent suffering and death, we pray that God the Holy Spirit would use his Word to strengthen the faith he has placed in our hearts. It is God the Holy Spirit who enables you and me to say along with the Apostle Paul, as he writes in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, "Therefore we are always confident and know that...we live by faith, not by sight." Amen.