

Scripture Reading:

Luke 7:1 “Now when [Jesus] concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. 2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. 3 So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, 5 "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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 turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

10 And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.”

The Faith of the Centurion

This morning we continue our journey through the Gospel of Luke coming to the account of the faith of the Centurion.

- **It was not difficult for me to see what the focus of this message should be: When Jesus says “I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.”**

When Jesus sees great faith, we should strive to see what it is and what it does! [Like James we must have a child-like approach!]

The account of the Centurion is given by both Matthew and Luke and this proclamation about the Centurion’s great faith is at the center of both!

- **What we want to understand this morning is what this faith was and why Jesus marveled at it!**

First let us quickly review what happened as we put together the two accounts that we have: [Mention that this makes the list of Bible contradictions! And comparison Chart]

- **Jesus enters Capernaum**
- **Jesus approached by a centurion through Jewish emissaries pleading for his gravely ill servant to be healed**
- **These emissaries appeal for compassion on behalf of the good works of the centurion.**
- **Jesus agrees to come and heal him**
- **Centurion is troubled by Jesus coming to his home. When Jesus is near the house he sends new messengers and likely follows them to make sure that Jesus understands his request.**
- **The centurion clearly explains why Jesus need only speak a word.**
- **Jesus marvels at this great faith**

- **Jesus pronounces the victory of His Kingdom and warns those in the nation of Israel**
- **Jesus turns to the Centurion and says, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.”**
- **The servant is healed that very hour.**

As you can see, it is NO problem to see how the two accounts are not contradictory and together help us to fully see what happened that day.

- **Matthew gives us more details of what Jesus said to those present, the Jewish leaders and the Centurion and concludes with the healing.**
- **Luke tells us of the emissaries and the healing at the end but in BOTH accounts the focus is clearly on the faith of the Centurion; which is where we will spend our time today.**

To understand what Jesus marveled at, we need to remember the structure and discipline of the Roman armies:

We have likely heard the term Roman legion which was a group of five or six thousand Roman soldiers under a general’s command. They were made up of ten cohorts which included 150 horsemen. Each of these cohorts consisted of six units called centuries which consisted of 80 to 100 soldiers. The leader of this group was a Centurion one of which we find in Luke’s account.

This man was what we call a God-fearer, as someone outside the nation of Israel who has been given the gift of saving faith:

- **We can think of Rahab or Ruth in the Old Testament.**
- **The two most famous in the New Testament would be this centurion and Cornelius who Peter preached the Gospel too as the Holy Spirit prepared to bring in the fullness of the Gentiles or as we find in Matthew’s account: “many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”**

We know that this unnamed Centurion was a God fearer because of the testimony of the Jewish leaders about his works of faith and the demonstration of his faith in this morning’s account.

Jesus marveled at this man's faith and that should get our attention because it is one of only two places where Jesus as the Son of Man marveled at what He saw during His earthly ministry:

- **He marveled at this man's faith here at Capernaum**
- **And He marveled at the unbelief that He saw in His own home town as related in the sixth chapter of Mark's Gospel: "5 Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He marveled because of their unbelief."**

I think it is safe to say that here at Church of the King; we would rather have Jesus marvel at our faith rather than our unbelief.

- **So how will we know if we are exercising such marvelous faith?**

Paul puts it this way in Hebrews 11: 1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen..."

Or in verse three "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

And again in verse six: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

We want to keep these verses in mind, as we listen again to what the Centurion said to Jesus:

"Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You.

- **He approaches Jesus with a humble and contrite heart: Fearing God!**

"But say the word, and my servant will be healed.

- **The God who framed the entire creation with His Word can speak and heal this servant!**

8 “For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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.”

- **This Centurion believed that Jesus was the one with ultimate authority**
- **Just as the Centurion would obey an order from his general, or just as he could command a soldier to act and he would obey: So Jesus could say that his servant should be healed and the very demons of hell would have to obey.**

There is no begging, no emotions, no excuses or rationalizing and certainly NO proud appeals for something that this Centurion deserved:

- **Just an appeal for Jesus to do what Jesus had the power to do!**

Now let us note the reaction of Jesus:

“9 When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

Jesus says we have seen great faith: Do you want to have great faith?

- **Then you must believe “that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”**
- **We must believe that God is the Creator and we are mere creatures!**
- **To have this great faith we “must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**
- **To have this great faith we must believe that "All authority has been given to [Jesus] in heaven and on earth.**
- **And we must believe that Jesus wants us to “go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that [He] commanded”**
- **And we must believe that Jesus is with us “always, even to the end of the age.”**

This is what we see here in Luke's account this morning:

- **A God-fearing Centurion who believed that Jesus was who He claimed to be!**
- **He seeks Him bringing a simple request for the servant he loves and his request is granted.**

This is truly where the "foolishness of God" confounds the "wisdom of man."

- **Surely a man or woman of great faith must study for many years to learn all they will need to have great faith.**
- **Surely they will need many long hours in prayer to prepare themselves for such great faith.**
- **And truly they must live special lives to demonstrate such great faith!**
- **That is exactly what the Jewish leaders thought as they made their appeal to Jesus based on this Centurion's good works.**

It has certainly been the case in many chapters of Church history down through the ages as we have focused on knowledge or emotions or pomp & circumstance instead of exercising the simple great faith that Jesus saw in this Centurion.

- **We could think of many applications**
- **We can have no better application than what we have witnessed here at Church of the King this morning: Great faith is what we saw this morning as Dale and Elizabeth brought little Abigail to the feet of Jesus to have her baptized.**
- **They demonstrated that they do not believe that they are worthy to parent such a great gift, just as the centurion thought himself unworthy of having Jesus in his home!**
- **They have demonstrated that they believe that little Abigail was born dead in trespasses and sin as result of their being fallen parents who could pass on nothing but their fallen nature**
- Just as the centurion's servant was "sick and ready to die!"

- They have demonstrated that they believe that little Abigail will **ONLY** be saved through the same gracious gift of faith that has saved them!
- Jesus must say the word!
- They have come this morning claiming the promise of Jesus that salvation is unto them and their children, asking Jesus to say the word, believing that their child will be healed, made whole and righteous through the blood of her Savior Jesus.
- And Lord-willing Dale and Elizabeth, and the rest of us as their helpers will continue to demonstrate this great faith as little Abigail grows into a women of God; calling her continuously back to this day of her Baptism and challenging her to live as who she has become in Jesus!

Some will certainly charge that we are teaching or at least headed down the road toward presumptive regeneration:

- We are being no more presumptuous than this Centurion who had great faith.
- This Centurion who believed in the real Jesus and requested that He do what was in His power to do.
- This is what Jesus called “great faith!”
- The Centurion did not say, “IF you are the Son of God...”
- He did not say, “IF you have the authority to heal...”
- He did not approach someone other than Jesus asking for this miracle.
- He did not presume that Jesus would heal his servant, but asked Him to show compassion just as we did this morning with little Abigail.

We come to the Jesus who has the power to save and claim the promise pronounced in Peter’s 2nd Epistle:

“9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

If we fail to show such great faith, then we are acting like those “sons of the kingdom,” whom Jesus said would “be cast out into outer darkness” where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

When we show such great faith, we join with Joshua in saying, “as for my house, we will serve the Lord!”

➤ **We stand here today believing the words of Jesus like that faithful Centurion**

The one to whom Jesus said “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you!”

Luke tells us that “his servant was healed that same hour.”

The Angel Gabriel proclaimed to Joseph that Jesus would “save His people from their sins!”

Today, WE are called and commanded to have the same great faith we have seen in this faithful Centurion: By believing that it is so!

Communion Meditation:

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. *2* For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. *3* By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

Genesis 4:3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. *4* Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, *5* but He did not respect Cain and his offering.

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.