

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,' & 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."

Great Faith

In my last message I suggested that as serious Christians we should see three major concerns today where we must have the understanding of our times and be ready to confront the world & the Devil:

- The taking of innocent life!
- Oppression of BIG government!
- Science & Technology which deny Almighty God!

We talked about how these three concerns have led to the idolatry of our times...

Idolatry of self.

Idolatry of power.

Certainly, the idolatry of science!

And 2020 saw a crescendo of all three!

I pointed out that we should be just as provoked about such idolatry in our land as the Apostle Paul was with the Greek culture of his day.

- And finally we asked what we are supposed to do about the killing of the unborn, the explosive growth of government and the worship of secular science???

Thinking about it should remind us of that great scene from Return of the Kings when they plan to draw out Saruman's forces as a diversion and Gimli retorts with, 'certainty of death, small chance of success... What are we waiting for!

Well the answer that I gave was the common and simple answer: We are to trust and obey!

We are not to despair and think all is hopeless or wait for a rapture:

We are to be the faithful servants working to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus because it is light that dispels the darkness!

I promised to expand on what it means to trust and obey:

This week we will see that trust requires faith because next week we will learn how God calls us to obey impossible commands, or at least commands that are impossible for us to obey in our human strength or wisdom.

In order to flesh out trust & obedience, I want to return us to a couple of important lessons we learned in our journey through Luke's Gospel account. *[and yes that was about twelve years ago!]* The first comes from our morning text:

- It is not difficult to see what the focus of that lesson 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, because such faith is required to address those three major issues of our day!

- 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: Jesus enters Capernaum and is 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 the servant, but the Centurion is troubled by Jesus actually 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 and his concerns.

The centurion clearly explains why Jesus need only speak a word.

- Jesus then marvels at what He refers to as great faith!

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.

Now to understand what Jesus marveled at and learn our lesson about trust, we need to remember the structure and discipline of the Roman armies:

The Roman army was divided into units called centuries which consisted of 80 to 100 soldiers.

The leader of this group was a Centurion like the one we find in our morning text.

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.

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 why did Jesus see great faith and 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... 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.

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,' & 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 the word 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!

[mention our responsive reading of the creation account with regard to the sanctify of life & the importance of real science!]

- To have this great faith we must believe that "All authority has been given to [Jesus] in heaven and on earth.

[why the Reformation produced the concept of limited government!]

- 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!**

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: In our families, our marriages, here at Church, our vocations and even how we relate to the civil magistrate.**

But with the example we are given of a Soldier wanting his servant to be healed we can have no better application than what we are witnessing here at Church of the King with five new covenant children on the way! Lord willing they will be born healthy, but they need much more than physical health, and attaining eternal life requires trust.

- **Great faith is what we will see & demonstrate when these little ones are brought to the feet of Jesus to have them baptized.**
- **In doing this the parents are showing that they do not believe they are worthy to parent and disciple such a great gift, just as the centurion thought himself unworthy of having Jesus in his home!**
- **Those parents will confess that those precious newborns are 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!"**
- **Through faith we believe that these children will be saved, made whole and righteous through the blood of their Savior Jesus.**
- **And Lord-willing those parents, and the rest of us as their helpers will continue to demonstrate this great faith as the little ones grow into men & women of God...**
- **Calling them continuously back to the day of their Baptism and challenging them to live as those who have had the Name of Jesus placed upon them!**

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

- **I would remind such critics that we are being no more presumptuous than this Centurion who had great faith.**
- **This Centurion 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 some experts 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 do when the children are presented for baptism.**

We come to the Jesus who has the power to save and claim the promise Hebrews 11:6: “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.”

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

- **We must 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!

- **Then and only then are we ready to trust God as we do battle in our age!**

Communion Meditation:

Matthew 8: “10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed,

“Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!

11 And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”