

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

In our text Jesus encounters a Roman Centurion and it should not be difficult 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!

I want to review this passage and then suggest two places in our worship services here at Church of the King where we can exercise such great faith today!

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 each!

We can fully understand what happened that day by putting the two accounts together, and I should point that these two accounts almost always make the list of Bible contradictions!

- I would simply point out that there is a good reason that we have not one but FOUR Gospel accounts: Not one, and not identical! [*discuss*]

So here is how I see them fitting together as they relate the events of that day:

- Jesus enters Capernaum
- Jesus is first approached by Jewish emissaries pleading for the Centurion's gravely ill servant to be healed [this exchange is given only by Luke]
- These emissaries appeal for compassion on behalf of the good works of the centurion.
- Jesus agrees to come and heal him
- The Centurion is then troubled by the thought of Jesus actually coming to his home.
 - When Jesus is near the house the Centurion 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 then marvels at this great faith
 - Jesus pronounces the victory of His Kingdom and warns those in the nation of Israel [*given only by Matthew*] • Jesus then turns to the Centurion & says, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.”
 - The servant is healed that very hour.
 - So the two accounts are not contradictory and when put together they actually give us a fuller picture of just what happened that day.

In the end, BOTH accounts focus on the great faith Jesus saw in that 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 often hear about Roman legions which were comprised of five or six thousand Roman soldiers under a general's command. They were often divided into ten cohorts, like our battalions. Each of these consisted of six units called centuries with 80 to 100 soldiers. The leader of this group was a Centurion like the one we find in Luke's account. This man was what we often call a God-fearer, as someone outside the nation of Israel who rightly fears the One True God:

We can think of Rahab the prostitute or Ruth the Moabite as examples of such faith in the Old Testament.

- **To learn our lesson about great faith, we must listen carefully 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!**

He then acknowledges the power of Jesus when he simply says, “But say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

- **This Roman soldier understands that the God who framed the entire creation with His Word can speak and heal his servant!**

He understands this because it has been this man's life experience:

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 the word for his servant to 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 tells those there that day and all of us that we have seen great faith!**

Jesus marveling at this man's faith 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 great 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 [Jesus] 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.
- And we must remember that great faith in the eyes of Jesus is always a simple faith, or what He refers to as child-like faith!

The Centurion seeks Him bringing a simple request for the servant he loves and his request is granted: here we see the “foolishness of God” confounding the “wisdom of man.”

Just consider what must have been going through the minds of those religious leaders as Jesus commends the great faith of this Roman Soldier who had just met Jesus!

- Faith belonged to them and not to Rome they might have thought!

Surely a man or woman of great faith must study for many years to learn all they will need to know about having 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 efforts to help the Jews.

- 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.
- Thus, the question is: Can, or should we see such great faith today?

To have such great faith we too “must believe that Jesus is Who He claims to be, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” To have this great faith today we must believe the Truth Jesus gave us in the Great Commission, believing 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.” And we must believe that Jesus is with us “always, even to the end of the age.”

As I mentioned, there are two examples of such great faith that should be, and Lord willing are seen in our worship services here at Church of the King!

- Sadly, neither is as common as they should be in many American churches today, & we should pray they are restored!

The first is when faithful parents bring a new child to the Church for baptism and the second is found in what we do each week with our time of confession and absolution or forgiveness.

- Done properly, they both demonstrate and require the great faith that Jesus saw in that Roman Centurion.

We were doubly blessed a few weeks ago to witness such faith when the Whitted & Kendrick families brought Amara and Meadow to the feet of Jesus to have them baptized.

With this action, they acknowledged that they are not worthy or able to parent such a great gifts, just as the centurion thought himself unworthy of having Jesus in his home!

They were confessing that little Amara & Meadow 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 also confessed that their little ones will ONLY be saved through the same gracious gift of faith that has saved them!

They came to the Church, claiming the promise of Jesus that salvation is unto them and their children...

Asking Jesus to say the word, believing that their children will be healed, made whole and righteous through the blood of their Savior Jesus. And Lord-willing these parents, and the rest of you as their helpers, will continue to demonstrate this great faith as little Amara & Meadow grow into women of God...

- **Calling them continuously back to that day of their Baptism and always challenging them to live as those they have become in Jesus!**

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

- **The reality is that we are no more presumptuous here 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 our parents have done in bringing, their children to be baptized, claiming the promises of God, that salvation is unto us and to our children!

If we fail to show such great faith, then we risk acting like those faithless “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!”

- **The second area in worship where we demonstrate such great faith is in our time of Confession and Absolution or forgiveness.**

It is a part of the service that we should never be late for, nor ever take for granted or think of it as not all that important!

- **It is a time where we remember the glorious Good News that was delivered to us at our conversion & baptism!**

Our sins are forgiven, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

- **The Cross of Christ is central to our salvation and there is NO other way for our sins to be forgiven because we were under God’s just judgment.**

So if we know that our sins are forgiven, why confess them and hear the Good News again each week?

Well, as Pastor Wilson always reminds us we should not come into God’s House with dirty boots. And I would add that we need this each week because it is so hard for us to grasp the reality of our sins being actually and fully forgiven!

- **We tend to be like the Centurion who thought himself unworthy to have Jesus in his own home!**

This is why God continues to remind us about the glorious salvation that we have. There are many places in the Scriptures where we are given amazing pictures to help us fully understand this incredible truth of God’s Grace... In Psalm 103 we read: “10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

- **The Psalmist is careful to say that our sins are as far from us as the east is from the west & not the north from the south! Have you pondered why that is?**

IF the Psalmist had said as far as the north is from the south: We could calculate the distance between the north and south poles: Large but measurable: But how far is the east from the west?

Do you see the point? God does not want us to try and figure out just how far that could be, but to ponder & believe the great work that the Blood of Jesus has accomplished!

The prophet Micah gives us another image to consider when pondering the riches of God’s Grace: Micah 7:19 “[God] will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.”

- **Our sins are taken away, cast away with a distance we cannot measure and a depth we cannot imagine!**

And finally we can turn to the Book of Hebrews for even more comfort when it come to dealing with our sins... Hebrews 10:16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” 17 then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

- **Ponder that for a moment and then listen as the writer gives us further encouragement.**

18 “Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. 19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

- **We can never fully comprehend the wonder of what God has done, but these images are there to assure us that it is all true!**

We should come each week confessing our sins and exercising the great faith Jesus marveled at, by believing the forgiveness of our sins is true! True, because Jesus has declared that our sins are forgiven!

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 simply believing that it is so!**

Communion Meditation:

Hebrews 10: “18 “Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. [no more sacrifices!] 19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”