

TRINITY

BIBLE CHURCH DALLAS

The Sermon

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Luke 7:1-10

"Such Great Faith"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, we've got a great passage. And what comes to my mind before I ask you to turn to it is a quote I read by Charles Haddon Spurgeon this week, that "the simple preaching of Jesus will never fail." And there is power in the most simple of passages as they call us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to the gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 7. And we're going to be in the first ten verses today, Lord willing. The title of this message is "Such Great Faith. Such Great Faith." Luke chapter 7, I'm going to begin reading in verse 1.

The Word of God reads, "When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, 'He is worthy for You to grant this to him; for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.'

"Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, 'Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I'm not worthy for You to come under my roof; for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under

authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, "Go!" and he goes, and to another, "Come!" and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this!" and he does it.' Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, 'I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.' When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health." In perfect health. This is the reading of God's Word. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, once again, we have read Your Word. It's living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. It's just as alive today as when Luke wrote it 2,000 years ago. And as we peer into this episode in the life of Christ, just draw us into this episode and draw Christ into us. Lord, I pray that essential truths of this passage will find a home in our hearts, be like a seed that would be planted in the fertile soil of our soul, and that it would germinate and bear much fruit in our lives. So we ask, God, that You do an internal work within us during this hour as we receive Your Word. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen." [End]

In these verses that I have just read, we see the supreme importance of faith. The kingdom of God functions by faith. The kingdom of God moves forward by faith. Faith is the currency by which the economy of the kingdom of God operates. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for those who come to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." This means that faith is necessary to please God. Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

And faith is necessary to seek God. Without faith, you would never seek God. And faith is necessary to believe God and to come to God. Everything in your spiritual life operates by faith. I mean, Hebrews 11, that great Hall of Fame chapter, "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice. By faith Enoch walked with God. By faith Noah built the ark. By faith Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. By faith Sarah conceived in her old age. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob. By faith Jacob blessed his sons. By faith Joseph gave orders for his bones after his death to be buried in the Promised Land. By faith Moses considered the riches of Christ greater

riches than the treasures of Egypt. By faith the walls of Jericho came down. By faith Rahab did not perish when Jericho was besieged.

All of these men and women gained approval with God through faith. That's how indispensable faith is in your life and in my life, that every step of the Christian life we are trusting God. We were saved by faith. We walked by faith. We serve by faith. We live by faith. And this is exactly what we learn in this scene in Luke 7 in the life of Jesus. Jesus heals this man because of his faith, not because the centurion is worthy, not because the centurion loved the nation of Israel, not because the centurion was good to his servant. Jesus blessed him simply and solely because of faith.

The same is true in your life. You'll never merit the blessing of God. You will never deserve the blessing of God. What blessing that will come to your life – the channel, the means – is faith. And so we want to look at this passage this morning that all works and builds towards the end of verse 9: such great faith. That's what's needed in your life today: such great faith.

So, as we begin to walk through this passage, the first thing I want you to see is "the designated place." That's in verse 1, "the designated place." "When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum." That is to say, after Jesus had completed the sermon that is recorded in Luke chapter 6, the Sermon on the Plain, after Jesus had delivered this extraordinary message, He went to Capernaum.

Now this does not surprise us because Capernaum was, really, His adopted hometown. It was His ministry headquarters in Galilee. It was His base of operation. It's located on the north to northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, as far up north as you could be. And it was the home of Peter and Andrew and James and John. That's where Jesus first called them to forsake their nets and "follow Me, and I'll make you fishers of men." And so this is the natural place for Jesus to return after preaching this extraordinary sermon and His itinerate evangelistic ministry of traveling from town to town and village to village for Him now to pull back into Capernaum, no doubt to catch His breath for a moment.

As I was thinking about this and thinking of application for your life, I actually thought about my life. And I travel a lot and preach in a lot of places, and I thought, "You know what my Capernaum is? It's Dyer Street." I mean, Dyer Street is my Capernaum. I mean, this is where I keep coming back to preach at Trinity Bible Church, to recharge my batteries. And across the street is the Men's Bible Study on Thursday mornings. And across the street is where I do Steadfast Hope to help Kent be known and our podcast. And it's across the street that we have our office for One Passion Ministry. So, I mean, this is like my Capernaum. And I'll be in tears when we move to our new location up on LBJ, and that'll be my Nazareth, I guess. But this is always going to be my Capernaum. a Capernaum.

And I don't know what your base of ministry place is, a place you keep coming back to to serve the Lord. It could be right here in this church, being a part of the music team. It could be in your neighborhood. It could be in your kitchen. I don't know where it is that you set up base to serve the Lord, but Jesus had a Capernaum, and we all need a Capernaum.

But, second, I want you to see "the deadly problem, the deadly problem." That's in verse 2 as this narrative begins to unfold. "And a centurion's slave who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die." So we're introduced first to the centurion.

A centurion was a Roman military officer who was in charge of 100 Roman soldiers. That's why he's called a centurion – century, centurion, 100. And he has been placed there by Rome to exercise oversight. Rome had what was known as the "Pax Romana," the "Peace of Rome." So when they would come in and occupy a kingdom or a nation, they would move in. And they were very brilliant to let that nation continue to function as according to their own customs and traditions, but they would place a heavy military presence there. It was known as the Peace of Rome, lest anything get out of hand. And so this centurion has been located here to Galilee to be over 100 Roman soldiers just to keep everything in order.

"And a centurion has a slave." Usually a slave is regarded as just a disposable piece of property at this time. But this is very unusual. This centurion does not see his slave as such an inanimate object almost, but he cares for him very much.

And it says, "he was highly regarded." The slave was highly regarded. That means highly prized, highly valued. "And he has become sick," it says. And the word "sick" here means "badly ill," "extremely sick." It says, "about to die." In this day and time, there's no heroic medical assistance that can just be helicoptered in to sustain someone's life. When you approach the doorstep of death, rarely does the situation ever turn around in this day and time. He has, really, one foot in the grave. He is on death's doorstep. And so those who are around him in the Centurion's house have really gone into a death watch as this very highly-respected slave is about to step out of this life and into the next life.

And so God was using this in the life of this centurion, this extreme trial. I mean, he loves this slave, and he loves the people of God in Israel. And there's nothing that he can do about it. But he's heard about Jesus, and he's heard about Jesus teaching and preaching, but also healing all who come to Him. And so he realizes, "If somehow we can just get a message to Jesus, for Jesus to come to my house, He could heal my slave."

And so God is using this trial to show this centurion, "You're really not in charge like you think you're in charge." The centurion is used to being in charge of a hundred Roman soldiers, and he gives the orders, and everybody does what he says to do. And he's just large and in charge of every situation. He's got everything in the palm of his hand. He has all the resources that he needs to tower over the region of Galilee and here in Capernaum. But he has now come to this situation where he realizes, "I'm not in control. There's nothing I can do about this. My slave, he's on the slippery slope and he's cascading down into the grave." And so as a result of that, he will turn to Jesus.

And I think there's a lot for us to learn here before we move on, that you're not in control of your life, not like you think you are. You're not in control of your health. You're not in control of your finances. You're not in control of your family like you think you are. And it just takes one doctor's visit, it just takes one stock market crash, it just takes one firing at work. it just takes whatever, and you suddenly realize what you should have known all along, that "this is out of my hands, this is out of my control." And once we realize it, it has the effect on us as it did upon this centurion, "I need the Lord."

And we grow the most and grow the closest to the Lord not during times of success, but during times of suffering and difficulty. That's when we realize our own weakness and our own impotence, and we look to the Lord. We have to be knocked to the ground before we look up. And that's what's going on with this centurion. This isn't a bad thing, it's a good thing, because God is using it in his life to drive him to the Lord.

I wonder what there is in your life this morning that's driving you to the Lord, that's driving you to your knees, that's pulling the rug out from underneath you, that's getting your attention, that's conveying to you, "I'm not in control of my present. I'm not in control of my future. I need the Lord."

This leads us, third, to verse 3, "the desperate petition." Verse 3, "When he" - the centurion - "heard about Jesus," - Who hadn't? Everyone has heard about Jesus. I mean, He is crisscrossing the landscape of Galilee and going to every city and town and hamlet and village, and preaching and teaching and healing, and there are just throngs of people who are pouring out of little towns to follow Him wherever He goes. Of course he heard about Jesus.

"When He heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come." I mean, this is the result of his love for the nation of Israel, his love for the people of God, which is very strange because he wasn't born there. He really doesn't live there, he's just been stationed there, he's just been

positioned there. But he's gotten to know these Jewish elders; and as we'll see in just a moment, he's built them a synagogue, which is like building them a church building for them to meet in and to worship in.

And so as he's gotten to know these Jewish elders, "he sends them to Jesus to ask Jesus to come." These elders were local Jewish officials in Capernaum. They were spiritual leaders in the synagogue in Capernaum and they presided, really, as judges who would decide matters between different parties there in Capernaum. And so this was the best that this centurion could put forward to go to Jesus is to send these leaders of the synagogue to ask Jesus to come.

And the reason he wants them to come, at the end of verse 3, "to come and save the life of his slave." Just to remind you the word "slave" means "to rescue someone from great harm." The word means "deliverance from extraordinary difficulty." And so they are to ask Jesus to come to deliver this slave from death. And there's nowhere else that the centurion can turn; it's Jesus or nothing because Jesus is the only hope, just like He is for you and me.

And so in verse 4, "When they" - the Jewish elders - "came to Jesus," - and Jesus is enroute to Capernaum. He's leaving where He preached the Sermon on the Plain, which is another version of the Sermon on the Mount in Luke 6. Jesus is now walking from this area where He's preached this sermon and He's headed back to His base of operation, to His ministry headquarters in Capernaum.

And so, verse 4, "When they came to Jesus," - Jesus is enroute to Capernaum, and they have come from Capernaum so they meet somewhere, let's say, in the middle - "they earnestly implored Him." The word "earnestly" means "zealously." I mean, emotionally implored Him. The ESV says, "pleaded with Him." It's a good translation. They urged Him and they besieged Him. We could even use the word "beg." "They begged Him, saying, 'He' - referring to Centurion - 'is worthy. He is deserving for You to grant this to him. Look at what a good man he is, what a respectable

person he is in our community. Look what all he has done for our community and for our neighborhood, for what he's done for our city. He is worthy for You to grant this' - meaning this healing of his slave - 'to him.'"

And now verse 5 begins with the word "for" which introduces a further explanation why Jesus should come and do this: "for he loves our nation." The nation here is Israel, God's chosen people. "For he loves our nation and it was he" - the centurion - "who built our synagogue." That's a house of worship. There had to be ten male men to have enough to begin to start a synagogue.

Now, Capernaum is a fairly important city. It's right on a trade route. So they, no doubt, have more than just ten adult men to comprise a synagogue. I mean, this is a thriving place and it's right on the seacoast of the Sea of Galilee, so there has to be a large number of people in this synagogue. And so this centurion has built a pretty large building by himself for them to worship in. And he has, no doubt, used his own soldiers who are at his beckoning call to do the heavy lifting and to do the work to build them this house of worship. What a wonderful thing for this man to do. I can't think of a better investment of one's time and effort and sweat equity and resources than to build a house of worship.

And so in verse 6, "Now Jesus started on His way with them." He's already headed to Capernaum, but He now immediately responds to this request. And we see something of the heart of Jesus, how responsive He is when people reach out to Him. You remember when He was walking through the crowd and a woman with a hemorrhage reached out and just touched the tassel on His garment and Jesus stopped and, "Who touched Me?" Well, He's surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of people. The disciples would have, in essence, said, "Who didn't touch you?" But Jesus was consciously aware that even behind Him that somebody was reaching out for His help and assistance. That's the way Jesus operated. He said, "Him who comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out," John 6:37.

And so of course, Jesus now immediately responded to this request and "started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house," - So, He's with these Jewish elders, Jesus striding with them to the house of the centurion - "and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him," - So this shows how desperate the centurion is. He sends another entourage of people to find Jesus and to bring Him here or to give Him this message that we're about to hear, and it shows that the slave must be even closer to the moment of death. The centurion can't wait any longer, so he sends out these friends to deliver this message to Jesus because the time is running out. "If something doesn't happen now, he's going to die." Now, this message is an indication, "There's not even time for You to come all the way to my house, You're going to have to do something now before he slips into eternity."

And so in verse 6, "saying to Him," - and so this is the message the centurion gave to these friends to give to Jesus. They're just the messengers. They're just relaying this message to Jesus as if the centurion is standing right there - "Lord." You see that? You know what the word "Lord" means? Master, the One with all authority. It's the Greek word *kurios*. This centurion who is a master with authority over a hundred soldiers recognizes that there is a Master over him, and it's not his commanding officer. He recognizes that Jesus is the One with all authority, that He is Lord, that He is over the centurion.

"Lord, do not trouble Yourself further." That means, "Do not bother, for I'm not worthy for You to come under my roof." He recognizes his own unworthiness for Jesus to even step into his house, that Jesus is so far supreme and superior to him that "I'm not deserving. I'm not worthy for You to even step into my life or into my house."

And in verse 7 he continues to give this explanation, starts with the word "for." "For this reason, I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you." Boy, that really gives insight into this centurion. "The reason that I sent the Jewish elders is because I'm not even worthy to approach You. I'm not worthy to talk to You. I'm not worthy to enter into Your presence." This

is extraordinary insight that this centurion has that's going to lead up to Jesus marveling at his faith.

"I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. You don't even have to come. I know who You are. I know what You can do. You can just stand here outside of town and You can just say, 'Be healed.' You don't even have to be in the room. You don't have to lay your hands on him. You just say the word, and my servant will be healed." This centurion believes, number one, that Jesus did not have to come in person; number two, that Jesus has authority to heal; number three, that Jesus has authority over over distance and disease; and number four, Jesus can just say a word. "Let there be light," and the whole universe lit up.

So, now in verse 8, it's another verse that begins with the word "for." I mean, this man is just layering out. He's bearing his soul, he's bearing his heart, and giving further explanation as to why: "Jesus, You don't even need to come to my house. I'm not worthy for me to come to You. I'm not worthy for You to come to me. Just say the word."

Verse 8, "For I'm a man placed under authority. I'm a man under authority. I have a commanding officer over me, and as long as I am under his authority, then I have authority over my 100 soldiers. If I step out from under the authority of my commanding officer, then I have forfeited all authority over my 100 soldiers." I mean, the wheels inside this centurion's mind is spinning and is spinning in the right direction. He sees something that the others in Israel did not even see.

"For I am a man placed under authority with soldiers under me. So I'm both under and over. I'm under my commanding officer, I'm over my soldiers. And I say to this one," - to this one soldier - 'Go! Go do this!' and he goes, and to another," - to another soldier - 'Come! Come do this!' and he comes and does it, and to my slave," - still in verse 8 - "to my slave who is sick unto death, and he does it. I have total, complete authority,

comprehensive authority over every square inch of their life, and they exist to serve me."

And what the centurion is reasoning is, "I am under the authority of my officer. I can just say the word, 'Go! Come!' to my soldiers under me, and they will do it." This man is connecting the dots, "Jesus, You are Lord, and it's the same with You, that You are under the authority of God. And we know from the rest of Scripture that Jesus is God and that there is God the Father. You are under the authority of Your Father."

And throughout John's gospel, Jesus repeatedly says, "I've come to do the will of Him who sent Me. I've come to do the will of Him who sent Me. The words that I speak are the words that My Father gave to Me." Jesus is in total submission to the sovereign will of the Father for His life in His incarnation as He is here on the earth. Therefore, because Jesus is fully completely under the authority of the Father, the whole universe, the whole earth is under the authority of Jesus.

"My slave is under the authority of Jesus. The disease that is making him sick is under the authority of Jesus. The lifespan of my slave is under the authority of Jesus because He is under, He is over." This is an extraordinary insight. I hope you see this. And it speaks volumes to our lives, not just in recognizing who Jesus is, and Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given unto Me." But if there's going to be any authority in your life, you're going to have to be under the authority of the lordship of Jesus Christ. Every father, every mother who would have authority over their children, you need to be under the authority of the lordship of Jesus Christ. Every employer who has authority over those who work for you, in heaven's bookkeeping, you need to be under the authority of the lordship of Jesus Christ. Everyone in this room must be under the authority of Christ.

So, in verse 9, "the declared pronouncement." This scene in the life of Christ is now reaching its climax. And so, in verse 9, "Now when Jesus heard this," - when He heard what this centurion said, it says - "He marveled at him." Do you see that? "He marveled at him." There's only two

times in the entire New Testament where Jesus ever marveled about anything. This is one of those two. And the other is He marveled at the unbelief of the people, like, "How many miracles would I have to do? How much teaching would I have to give you before you would believe?" This is the only positive marveling that we see in the New Testament of Jesus, and it really is a glimpse into His humanity. The word "marveled" means "astonished," "amazed," "almost shocked."

"He marveled at him, and turned" - that means Jesus did a 180 away from these friends who have come from the centurion to bring Him this message, and away from the Jewish elders who are walking with Him stride for stride to the centurion's house. Jesus now turns - "and said to the crowd." So there is this vast crowd that is following Jesus from the sermon that He delivered in Luke chapter 6, and no doubt even picking up more people along the way. There's always a parade of people that are just multiplying behind Him.

"So He turns and said to the crowd that was following Him," - this is a teachable moment, this is a time to establish a truth, and here it is - 'I say to you,' - directed to the whole multitude there that day - 'not even in Israel have I found such great faith.'" You know what gets Jesus' attention? It's not that you love your nation. It's not that you're good to people who work for you. That's fine and good. But that's not really rings the bell in heaven. It's faith, F-A-I-T-H, forsaking all: "I trust Him." That's what got Jesus' attention and astonished and amazed Jesus." What great faith you have." The word "great" here means "enormous" faith. There's nothing grand about little faith. There's something glorious about great faith, great trust, great reliance in the Lord Jesus. This is the kind of faith you need in your life.

Proverbs tells us, "It's good to make our plans, it's commendable to make our plans." Proverbs 16:9, "Man makes his plans, but God directs his steps," meaning God's really the one in charge. You keep making your plans and God's going to keep changing them and overruling them. We have to trust the Lord. We don't have our future wired, we have to hold it with an open

hand. And God can step in at any second and redirect however He so pleases.

Faith is looking to Jesus, following Jesus, trusting Jesus, relying upon Jesus. And that's what this man is doing. Faith requires that you humble yourself and come under the authority of Jesus Christ. It means you're no longer doing your own thing. It means you're no longer operating off your own agenda for your life. Faith recognizes that you're unworthy of anything. You're unworthy to come to Jesus, you're unworthy for Jesus to come to you. And the only basis that we have to come to God and to come to Christ is through the sin-bearing death of Christ upon the cross.

And faith calls out to Christ, to bring our needs to Him, like this man is doing. That's what faith does. You and I need faith. We need for God to increase our faith. We want to have all the answers before we step out of the house, and we have to walk by faith. Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." So, where does faith take you? What does faith bring into your life? Well, I've quoted Hebrews 11:6 that "God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Faith honors God and God honors faith.

So, look at verse 10, "the divine power." This is the result of faith. "When those" - referring to the elders and friends without Jesus - Jesus was not there, the elders and the friends - "those who had been sent returned to the house." So they go back to the house without Jesus. Jesus doesn't even need to come to the house, so they go empty-handed without Jesus.

What did they discover? "They found" - and that word "found" means "to find something without any searching." It means "for something to be easily found." So, "They go into the centurion's house, and they found the slave in good health." He's healed. He's no longer on his deathbed. He's standing on his feet. He's serving the centurion. He's doing his chores and duties around the house. And these elders and these friends, the last time they saw this slave, he was in a horizontal position on the doorstep of death. Jesus - the implication is obvious, Luke doesn't even need to write it - Jesus simply spoke the word, and the slave was healed.

I want to say this again. It's not because of the centurion's worthiness. It's not because of what a good, fine, upright citizen he was or commander that he was. It was simply because he had faith, and it stunned Jesus to see faith like this.

So it is to be with each one of us. None of us are worthy for Jesus to be at work in our lives. Oh, He makes us worthy through His perfect obedience here upon the earth. But even for us, it is only by faith in Him that He has come to live inside of us and to work for our good.

Now, before we take the Lord's Supper, I want you to think with me just for a second how different it is for us than it was for this centurion in this sense. We don't need an intermediary between us and Jesus. You don't need anyone to approach Jesus for you. You don't need a priest to confess your sins to. You don't need a priest to serve you Mass. You don't need to pray to Mary because Jesus is so busy we have to go to His mother and His mother can get Jesus' attention, but you have no business going straight to Jesus. You don't need a patron saint to pray to who's somewhere close to Jesus who will submit your request to Jesus at just the right time. No. You go straight to Jesus. You don't need any Jewish elders to go on your behalf. You don't need any friends to go on your behalf. Jesus says, "Come to Me."

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In John 6:35, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will never hunger." And Jesus said in John 6:37, "The one who comes to Me, I will not cast out."

You go straight to Jesus. You don't need me to go to Jesus for you. You don't need the elders to go to Jesus for you. Jesus has opened up the way to Himself through His death upon the cross. And it is incumbent that you have faith in Jesus. If you have faith in Jesus, you can come to Jesus. But I'll tell you this: if you do not have faith in Jesus, you may not come to Him. You're barred from the throne of grace.

But we, for the most part here today, for most of us, have personal faith in Jesus Christ. And so we may come to Him and lay our needs before Him and confess our sins to Him and ask Him to give us strength and grace and help in time of need. So as we come to the Lord's Table, here in just a second, just to remind you I'm not a priest. These elements are not the means by which you come to Jesus. They're just symbols. They're just signs. I'm just a slave. Because of what Jesus did upon the cross, you may go straight to the Father and you may go straight to Jesus. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Let's pray.

[Prayer] Our Father in heaven, I pray that it would be true here today that the simple preaching of Jesus would never fail, that this simple story from the life of Christ would be very effective and effectual in our spiritual lives. May we carry this narrative with us throughout the week. May Jesus say of us, 'Such great faith I have not found in all of Dallas.' We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.