

Authority: A Biblical Perspective

Luke 7:1-10

Encountering Jesus Today

By Dave Urbanski

This past Sunday we took a deep look at Jesus' reaction to the faith of the Roman centurion in Luke 7 — and Pastor Scott noted to us that it's ONE of ONLY TWO times in the Scriptures that Jesus marvels at something he witnesses.

As we view this passage in its cultural and historical context, it becomes more and more remarkable.

The Romans were occupying Israel during Jesus' ministry in the first century. The Jews, understandably, weren't fond of the Romans; and while it is anyone's guess, if the Romans weren't too fond of the Jews, either, that would be of little surprise.

But this Roman centurion was desperate. He valued his servant, knew what was being said about this rabbi who healed people's infirmities, and decided Jesus is the answer.

So the centurion sent Jewish leaders to convince Jesus to heal his servant — and the passage in Luke notes that they even said the centurion helped build the synagogue in Capernaum. Jesus agrees and sets off for the centurion's home.

But Jesus doesn't get there — the centurion doesn't feel worthy of having Jesus under his roof, nor does he think such a trip is necessary.

“Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof,” the centurion said. “Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with 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 is raw, honest-to-goodness faith in Jesus, and the passage in Luke 7 notes that “when Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.’”

And when those who'd been sent from the centurion's home return to it, they “found the servant well.”

Amazing.

How often have we as believers in Jesus expressed this sort of faith in him?

Pastor Scott noted, importantly, that the centurion knew the truth: He ISN'T worthy! That is true — but what's also true is that NOBODY is worthy of Jesus. Not the Jews around him, not Jesus' disciples, not the Romans, not the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

Romans 3 spells that out for us: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

Pastor Scott noted that a lot of folks erroneously believe that if they do "just enough good stuff," they might rack up enough points to earn a trip to heaven after they die. But the Roman centurion understands what most people today (still) do not get. The centurion knows right down to his bones that he doesn't have what he needs for God to accept him. Most folks today view themselves as the "authority" over their own lives instead of properly viewing their lives as being under the authority of the Lord.

Pastor Scott also noted that the passage here unlocks three key aspects surrounding the idea of authority — and what it should mean to every follower of Jesus.

**Power.** "We don't have the power; but God does," Pastor Scott emphasized to us. Indeed, we on our own are powerless, but because the Lord promises to be with us "always," we can access his power to do what he's called us to do in this world.

**Submission.** The centurion understands the idea of giving orders — and receiving and obeying orders from his superiors. In the same way, part of what we do as Christians is mutually submitting to one to another — particularly husbands and wives! This is the kind of submission that helps all of us submit to God.

**Faith.** It is indeed remarkable that a pagan Roman would exhibit the kind of faith that puts Jesus' followers — and, in fact, the people of Israel — to shame. But if we've spent any time looking through the Scriptures, we find a God who shows us truth in unexpected ways. When we exhibit the kind of faith exhibited by the centurion, Pastor Scott said that's when we start to handle our lives differently.

As we approach and prepare ourselves for Easter Sunday, may all of us reflect on the amazing faith of the Roman centurion and ask ourselves if we have anything close to his faith.

Indeed, how wonderful it would be if Jesus “ marvels” at our faith, too!