

# A Centurion's Faith

## Introduction

As we considered in the very first sermon in this series, Luke's gospel emphasizes Jesus's love, concern, and care for many who were overlooked, ostracized, and unnoticed:

- Woman such as Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, and Mary and Martha
- The poor such as Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Plain: "Blessed are the poor..."
- Immoral women – the prostitute who poured oil on Jesus's feet
- Samaritans – the story of the Good Samaritan
- Lepers – the ten lepers who were healed
- Tax collectors – like the ones Jesus baptized
- Criminals – the two thieves
- Rebellious family members – the teaching on the prodigal son

*• sick and infirm*

*Now, in ch 7,* We now have the first of three interactions in which Jesus demonstrates his care and concern for those who are marginalized, ignored, and oppressed by society:

1. The healing of the centurion's servant
2. The raising of the widow's son
3. The forgiving of the sinful woman

Let's keep this in mind over the next month. Let's be aware of how Jesus overturns the expectations of society to love those who are often overlooked and outcast.

### Luke 7:1-10 ESV

<sup>1</sup>After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. <sup>3</sup>When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, <sup>5</sup>for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." <sup>6</sup>And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup>Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. <sup>8</sup>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." <sup>9</sup>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." <sup>10</sup>And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

5 Scenes

## Capernaum and a Centurion – v1-2

**<sup>1</sup>After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him.**

Jesus' <sup>teaching</sup> teach fills their ears – important to keep it in mind when reading this passage – *keep in mind the content from the sermon or the plain as it will come up later on.*

Centurion:

- In charge of 100 men (Decurion above 10)
- Either mercenary soldier, tax collector, or policeman
- Variety of nationalities – this one is not Jewish and likely not Roman

Slave:

- The centurion had a slave who was significant to him
- The slave's illness is the inciting event of this story – *this illness was, according to the word used, "incurable."*

## Coming to Jesus – v3-6a

**<sup>3</sup>When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, <sup>5</sup>for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." <sup>6</sup>And Jesus went with them.**

*\* the centurion has heard about Jesus... most likely referring to his miracles (maybe his teaching)*

Jewish emissaries:

- Lobby on behalf of the centurion
- Try to persuade Jesus to come to centurion's aid
- The word "earnestly" suggests this was a "serious effort"

Persuasion through commendation:

- They say the centurion is worthy of benefitting from Jesus' power
- **Bock:** "this is the only time that the NT uses this term positively to describe a specific person, as opposed to a general group or class of people"

*We should assume that this centurion was a special man*

- The explanation for the commendation is twofold:
  - The centurion loves the nation
  - He built their synagogue
  - A loving and generous posture even to those who might be considered enemies? Where have we seen that? The Jewish elders would not have been leveraging that [<sup>(his teaching)</sup> Jesus needs to do his duty for the community by repaying such a generous patron], but it is conspicuous following the sermon on the plain.

The persuasion worked; the emissaries were successful.

### Coming to Jesus Again – v6b-8

When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.<sup>7</sup> Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. <sup>8</sup>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.”

As Jesus approached, the centurion sent a second delegation to meet Jesus

The interaction indicates much about the centurion and much about what the centurion believed about Jesus

- Centurion’s beliefs:
  - Jesus was powerful and could heal his servant in a manner that was not burdensome – “ain’t no thing but a chicken wing”
  - Calling him Lord falls short of recognizing he was the Messiah but is definitely a recognition that Jesus was a significant person, even more significant than a rabbi
  - He was so esteemed by the centurion that the centurion thought Jesus too important for his home or presence
  - Jesus’ command of healing is all that would be needed
  - Jesus is so powerful that the forces allayed against the sick servant will be obeyed by Jesus just as the centurion’s men obey him
  - The centurion respects the magnitude of Jesus’ authority

- **WBC:** “Similarly, Jesus bears in virtue of his relationship to God the (much more comprehensive) authority that is God’s”
- **Bock:** “The centurion simply had a high view of Jesus”
- Key component of faith: recognizing the power of Jesus doesn’t require the presence of Jesus
- Centurion’s character:
  - The admonition to not come to his house is not just an admission by the centurion of Jesus’ power, it is also an indication of the centurion’s humility – “I am not worthy”
  - He shows courtesy and respect to Jesus, calling him “Lord”
  - Not only is the centurion not worthy to have Jesus come to his home, he is also not worthy to meet him
  - The centurion did not see himself worthy of direct contact with Jesus
  - Key component of faith: recognizing we don’t merit Jesus’ power ~~or~~ in salvation

### Commendable Faith – v9 → the climax and “point” of the story

<sup>9</sup> 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.”

Jesus’ reaction:

- Surprise and commendation
- This [faith], and not the healing, is the climax of this story: **FAITH** IT’S NOT ABOUT THING WE DESIRE; IT’S ABOUT THE ONE WE ARE ASKING!
- Surprise
  - Jesus marvels at this display of faith
  - Used only at one other time of Jesus: **Mark 6:6 ESV** He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. And Jesus

said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief.

- His marvel at their unbelief was directed at the fact that they did not acknowledge or accept who he was: *an agent of God*
- Commendation
  - *NOT JUST BECAUSE HE KNEW JESUS WAS POWERFUL*
  - Others had seen Jesus' power (Luke 4:40-41 – healing and exorcism)
  - The centurion's faith is commendable and unique in Israel because it notes the authority and power of Jesus' word outside of his presence and it is coupled with deep humility

### Commendable Faith

**Main Idea:** Commendable faith is a trust, a hope, a conviction based on who God is and what he has spoken [promised]. *specifically for us it is trust/hope/conviction in JESUS*

This is in opposition to a faith that is focused on the answer. Commendable faith is not ~~about how you are hoping but who your hope is in.~~ *so much about the quality of your hoping as it is about the object of your hope.*

The centurion's faith is exemplary because he accurately assessed who he was making his request to; this is seen in 1) his understanding that Jesus needn't be present, 2) his recognition that Jesus worked with God's authority, and 3) that he was not worthy of Jesus' presence. It was not commendable because he hoped really hard for the answer or because worked up the conviction to believe he would get what he wanted. *Thing or God*

But what about Hebrews 11:1?

- **Hebrews 11:1 ESV** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. *hope for something*
- Isn't that saying that faith is about being very sure in your and being convinced—believing—in what you can't see? *it seems like we should be fixated on what we have asked for!!*
- **Dorothy in Wizard of Oz:** "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

**Greg Koukl (Stand to Reason):** "Never read a Bible verse."

**Hebrews 11:2-3 ESV** <sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.   
 Commendable faith is about how hard you hope or how hard you believe in getting what you want. Commendable faith is putting your hope and belief, no matter how small it is—even if it is only the size of a mustard seed, in the God of creation and in his promises!

- Seamus, Warren, grief, marriages, salvation

Let's not put our hope in hope our convictions on things; let us put our faith in God.

### Concluding Result – v10

**<sup>10</sup> And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.**

One final point of application:

We see Jesus willingly crossing boundaries to see the kingdom of God grow:

- Racial: he was prepared to engage with and help a Gentile
- Social-economic: he was willing to help one of the nation's upper class
- Religious: he was willing come to the aid of a non-believer

How prepared are we to cross boundaries in order to see God's kingdom grow, to see the gospel proclaimed, to make God's greatness known?

We see the centurion willingly crossing boundaries to receive salvation from Jesus:

- Racial – helping the Jews, seeking help from a Jew
- Social-economic – making an appeal and showing deference to a poor man
- Religious – helping those who practice Judaism, requesting aide from a Jewish rabbi

Unbeliever, are you willing to cross boundaries to seek salvation from Christ?

- boundaries of pride that prevent you from acknowledging sin
- boundaries of fear of what people in your life might think
- boundaries of apathy that encourage you to protect the status quo

GOSPEL