

“A Faith that Jesus Calls Great”

(Luke 7:1-10 – Pentecost 2 – June 22, 2025)

Luke 7:1-10 – ¹Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. ²And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. ³So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. ⁴And 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.” ⁶Then 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. ⁷Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For 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.” ⁹When 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!” ¹⁰And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 11:1 says: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Our Christian faith does not rely on what we see or feel; it does not rely on our human understanding and experience. Our faith clings in hope to the Word and promises God has revealed in Scripture. These are centered in His Son, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners. Through faith given by God’s Spirit, we take Him at His Word. Even when we feel terrible guilt for our sins, we hear God declaring all our sins forgiven in Jesus, and faith says, “It is so! God is gracious!” Even in the dark hour of death, we hear God promising that, as He raised His Son from the dead, so He will raise up in the resurrection to eternal life, and faith says: “It is so! The God who so loved me that He gave His Son for me can never lie. I can trust His Word and promises in all things.”

In our text, we see an example of such faith that takes God at His Word, trusting Him beyond what is seen. Let us consider: **“A Faith that Jesus Calls Great”**: **1) It shows itself in love, 2) It humbly looks to Jesus as Savior, 3) It trusts Jesus’ powerful Word.**

1) It shows itself in love

One of the first things we notice about the centurion’s faith is that it showed itself in love. For the faith that takes God at His Word, rejoicing in His love and salvation in Jesus, wants to share that love. The Holy Spirit moves us to produce this fruit of faith in love (Galatians 5:22). This was the case with the centurion.

This man was a Gentile who apparently had converted to Judaism. He was a worshiper of the true God. The Jewish elders who brought his request to Jesus regarded him highly, as they would not have done for an unbelieving Gentile.

As a centurion, he was in charge of 100 soldiers. Normally, a man of such position in the world of the Roman Empire would have cared little for a servant. What is one dying slave when he can be replaced by another? But it says his “*servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant*” (vs. 2-3). His faith showed itself in love as he cared deeply for his fellow human in need, even one of such low position.

The Jewish elders reported another way his faith had shown itself in love: “*And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, ‘for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue’*” (vs. 4-5). From his own means, the centurion had built a synagogue so the Jews could have a place to worship at Capernaum. As he took to heart the Word and promises of God in Scripture, He knew the importance of believers coming together to hear God’s Word and pray, to be strengthened in faith, and to encourage one another in faith.

So we see his faith acting in love in ways not normally expected – in his mercy shown to a lowly servant, and in his generosity shown to Jews when he was a Gentile by birth.

When Jesus heard his plea for help through his friends, it says: “*Then Jesus went with them*” (vs. 6). We may be tempted to think the reason Jesus answered his request was that he had earned the Lord’s favor. Good things should happen to good people, we reason. Does this way of thinking affect how we approach our Lord? We are tempted to think that the better we have behaved lately, the more chance there is of Jesus hearing our prayer. But if we haven’t been so good, we doubt that He will answer. So we are tempted to trust what we see and feel in our lives, rather than trust what He promises in His Word.

But what if our Lord were to base His answer to our prayer on our merit or worthiness? What if it depended on how well our faith has shown in love? For have we always loved others with an unselfish love that thinks of their needs first, no matter who they may be? How about that person who seemed too unimportant to care about, as we were focused on our own position and serving our own interests? How about that person we have a hard time liking, whom we find much easier to avoid than to serve? How about that person we have not brought before the Lord in our prayers because of hard feelings against them?

And has our faith always shown itself in love by acts of generosity, like the centurion? As stewards of God’s grace, have we always been ready to give of the resources God has given us to serve others; or have we held back our time, talents, and treasures selfishly?

No doubt, the faith God's Spirit has put in our hearts, connecting us to the life of Jesus, does bear fruit in love (John 15:5). But this is not the basis for our prayers. Rather our faith is in Jesus alone, and the perfect love He showed as He came to serve and save us. Our faith is in His loving sacrifice for us, who died on the cross to take away all our sins, including all our failures to love.

Faith shows itself in love, but only because it looks to Jesus alone for His saving work. His all-giving love, by which He saved us, now moves us joyfully to serve others in love.

2) It humbly looks to Jesus as Savior

When the Jewish elders told Jesus that this man deserved His help, they were sharing evidence of his faith showing in love. But the centurion himself was not basing his request on anything he had done. He himself felt unworthy. But then, it was not about him. Faith does not parade itself; it looks only to its object. His eyes were on Jesus as the one who could help his servant. Here we see a faith that humbly looks to Jesus alone as the Savior.

We see such humility as Jesus approached his house. The centurion sent friends to tell Him: *"Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You"* (vs. 6-7). Even though he held high position among men, and he was known for his works of love, yet before Jesus he made no claims. He knew he was a mere man, a sinful man, addressing the holy God who walked among sinners.

How easy it is to become proud when we hold a high position, or when our works are recognized and praised among men. Self-centered pride is a fruit of the sinful nature. But humility is a gift of the Holy Spirit, a fruit of faith. The Holy Spirit leads us to approach Jesus in humility and trust, like the centurion, confessing with the hymn:

Not what these hands have done Can save this guilty soul;
Not what this toiling flesh has borne Can make my spirit whole...

Thy work alone, O Christ, Can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, Can give me peace within...

I bless the Christ of God, I rest on love divine,
And with unfaltering lip and heart I call this Savior mine.

This is a true and saving faith, that trusts only Jesus' blood to cleanse us of all our sin, and that trusts only Jesus' works to clothe us in righteousness. Such faith that rejoices in God's saving grace shows itself in love, humbly looking to Jesus as the Savior, as we see in the centurion. Jesus commends to us such a great faith, a genuine faith.

3) It trusts Jesus' powerful Word

Finally, such faith trusts Jesus' powerful Word. The centurion trusted Jesus' divine power to heal his servant even if He were not visibly present. He sent friends to tell Jesus: *"But say the*

word, and my servant will be healed. 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" (vs. 7-8).

The centurion understood authority. When a Roman commander gave an order to soldiers, it was as good as done. If that was true of his human authority, how much more so with the authority of God! He trusted that when Jesus speaks, it is as good as done.

"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!'" (vs. 9). Many Jews still did not believe, though they had seen Jesus' miracles. But this Gentile's faith trusted the power of Jesus' Word even in things not yet seen.

Sometimes people say, "I don't know what I would do without faith." They are talking about the object of their faith, Jesus. More specifically, they are talking about trust in His Word. For they cannot see Him now, but they can hear His promises. This is the faith Jesus commends as great, the faith that says: "What my Savior promises He will fulfill for my good, though presently I do not see. When Jesus speaks, it is as good as done."

It concludes: *"And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick" (vs. 10).* The faith that trusts the power of Jesus' Word will not be disappointed. This is true even for a weak faith. Jesus said in Matthew 17:20: *"Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."* It is not because of the strength of our faith, but because of His infinite power to act on our behalf. In His way, in His time, He will answer our prayer. He will move great obstacles and make our path straight. He will provide what we need. What He promises, He will give.

When you feel weak and fearful, take Him at His Word: *"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).* When troubled by sin, take Him at His Word: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).* When troubled by death, take Him at His Word: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).*

Thanks be to God! Our faith does not rest on what we see or feel. It rests on the sure promises of Him who came to live for us, die for us, and rise again to win our eternal life. We can take Him at His Word and rejoice as we live in His love, now and forever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.