

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (full sermon notes)

## "A Centurion Amazes Jesus..."

Luke 7:1-10

After healing all the people who came to Him of their diseases, infirmities, illnesses, and demon possession (cf. **Luke 6:18-19**), Jesus began preaching and teaching to those who would believe Him to be God's Son (cf. **Luke 6:20-23**): those who realized their own need for forgiveness; those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness; those who would seek to treat others the way they themselves wanted to be treated, being merciful to others just as their Father in heaven is merciful to them.

Jesus closed His sermon (cf. **Luke 6:46-49**) with a parable about two men, two ways of life and the two eternal destinies imposed according to which path was taken: one way was with God, the other was without God; one way led to hell and damnation, the other led to heaven and exaltation.

In our lesson today, Jesus uses a real life example of a man who chose to believe in and follow God's Son.

Read **Luke 7:1...** Jesus now leaves the mountain and goes to Capernaum (**Matthew 4:13**), "leaving Nazareth, He came and *settled in [made it His home town]* Capernaum." And so Capernaum became Jesus' adopted hometown, after being rejected and run out of His own home town, Nazareth.

In **Matthew 4:1-17; Luke 4:1-32** we find the record of Jesus' travels and events that took place after His baptism by John, at the Jordan River.

See **Luke 4:1-13...** Luke tells us how Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness of Judea, where He was tempted by the devil for 40 days and nights.

Jesus then (cf. **Luke 4:14-16**) returns to His home town Nazareth, in Galilee; and on a Sabbath day, in the synagogue, He declares (cf. **Luke 4:18-19**) that He is the Messiah and the fulfillment of **Isaiah 61:1-2**, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

In **Luke 4:21**, Jesus "began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'" At first (cf. **Luke 4:22**) the people speak well of Him, but then they begin questioning His words saying, "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

Knowing that they were thinking (cf. **Luke 4:23-24**), "Who does He think He is, the Messiah?" Jesus confronts their unbelief by telling them, 'no prophet is respected or welcomed in his own hometown.'" Familiarity can breed contempt, and a person of renown often gets no respect from his own family and friends, compared to that of his followers or students.

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Jesus then (cf. **Luke 4:25-27**) speaks to the people of two prophets from God who, like Him, were not welcomed or respected by Israel:

Elijah prophesied during the reign of the wicked king Ahab, whose Gentile wife (Jezebel) led him and the nation into worshipping Baal, a demonic deity of the Canaanites. God used Elijah to bring a 3.5 year draught that resulted in a famine, as a curse on Israel for rejecting God's messenger..

Jesus reminds the people how Elijah, although there were many widows in the land at that time, did not help any of them, but instead went to a God-fearing Gentile widow named Zarephath, who lived in Sidon (the homeland of Jezebel).

Jesus also reminds the people of the story of Elisha who healed a Gentile leper, named Naaman, who was a captain in Syrian army, enemies of Israel. There were many lepers in Israel at that time, but Naaman believed in the God of Israel and was healed.

Why did Jesus bring up these two prophets who God had used to help two Gentiles: one widow and one leper, during a time when Israel had many widows and lepers who did not receive any help? What's the point?

Jesus made it clear that those who please God are those who believe in and honor Him, not those who claim ancestral heritage, engage in religious rituals, or boast of anything received or achieved through human effort or acquisition.

At this point (cf. **Luke 4:28-30**), "the people in the synagogue were filled with rage," "and they got up and drove Jesus out of the city and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way."

Jesus then goes down to Capernaum, where the people (cf. **Luke 4:31-32**), "were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority."

Read **Luke 7:1...** Jesus is returning to Capernaum, His adopted home town and base of operations for His Galilean ministry, located on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee, not far from the hillside where Jesus had given the Sermon on the Mount.

Capernaum was an important city evidently, for there was a detachment of Roman soldiers there, commanded by a centurion. It would appear that the citizens of Capernaum held an exalted view of themselves and their city, for later on Jesus said (**Luke 10:15**), "You, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!" The city of Capernaum was later destroyed so completely, that the exact location of where it existed is unknown.

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The centurion in our passage today was a Gentile, and most likely a native of one of the surrounding territories to Capernaum. As a centurion, he commanded 100 soldiers, and he would have reached this level of responsibility and authority by distinguishing himself among the troops and rising up through the ranks, exhibiting his loyalty to Rome, his bravery and skill in combat, and his ability to oversee and lead men. His main duties in Capernaum would be to maintain the peace, enforce Roman law, and oversee the collection of taxes for Rome.

It is interesting to note that there are several centurions mentioned in the NT and all of them are spoken of favorably: The centurion overseeing the crucifixion of Christ said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" A centurion in Caesarea (named Cornelius) I will talk about later. There was a centurion in Jerusalem who saved Paul from being unjustly and unlawfully flogged. There was a centurion on the ship that was transporting Paul to the prison in Rome, who saved Paul from being killed by the soldiers guarding him (cf. **Mark 15:39; Acts 10:1-2; 22:25-26; 23:17-18; 27:1, 42-43**).

In Luke's narrative (**Luke 7:2**), we learn that this unnamed centurion has great affection for and thinks very highly of his unnamed slave. The care expressed by the centurion for his slave was uncommon in the world at the time of Christ:

Aristotle equated slaves to being living tools (*Ethics, 1161b.*); Gaius, a legal scholar of the time, noted that masters had total power over the life or death of their slaves (*Institutes, 1.52*); a Roman author named Varro stated that the only difference between a slave, an animal, and a cart - was that the slave was able to talk (*Agriculture, 1.17*).

Slaves were considered property to be used as their owners saw fit; however, the centurion in our lesson today expresses great concern for his slave. From Matthew's narrative we find out why (**Matthew 8:5-6**), "When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented."

Read **Luke 7:3-5**... The centurion had no doubt heard about Jesus' preaching, teaching, and healing ministry, for Jesus was well-known in the region of Galilee. **Luke 4:14**, "And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district."

**Matthew 4:23**, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people."

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It would appear that the centurion sent some Jewish elders to find Jesus and ask Him to come and heal his slave. These Jews must have thought very highly of this centurion, in order to go to Jesus and make this request. Notice in **Luke 7:4**, the Jews plead for Jesus to come, saying the centurion is a man worthy of this request, for he expressed love toward the people of Israel.

At the time of Christ, Jews and Gentiles commonly hated, and did not associate with, each other; but this centurion loved the Jews and had demonstrated his love by building them a synagogue. No wonder the Jews spoke so highly of him.

It would seem that this centurion believed in Jesus as Savior and Lord, much like the centurion Cornelius, in Caesarea who was said to be (**Acts 10:1-2**) "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people."

Read **Luke 7:6-7a...** Jesus is now on His way to the centurion's house, no doubt the Elders and various onlookers (who were anxious to see another miracle) were in the crowd. When they get close to the house, the centurion, perhaps feeling unworthy to have the Lord up close and personal, sends some of his friends out to ask Jesus not to come into the house; even admitting that is why he didn't go himself; for he didn't feel worthy to be in the Lord's presence.

Read **Luke 7:7b-10...** The centurion now suggests that Jesus just speak the word and his servant will be healed; for he believed that Jesus had divine power and authority, as was already demonstrated by all those He had healed.

The centurion was a military commander who followed the orders of those above him; and he expected those under him to obey his orders, just as a master expects his slave to obey his orders.

The centurion is aware that Jesus has authority over life and death and disease and illness and demons; and so the centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant just by speaking the words for him to be healed.

In **Luke 7:9**, Jesus acknowledges the centurion's expressed belief that He can heal the centurion's highly regarded and dearly loved servant, who was paralyzed. Jesus then says to the crowd, "not even in Israel have I found such great faith." Jesus is saying that the centurion exhibited greater faith than anyone in Israel.

Why would Jesus say that? Because the very religious, works oriented, self-promoting, ritualistic practices of Judaism left people separated from God without saving faith; and yet, here is this Gentile who is an example of the genuine faith that is acceptable to God.

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Jesus healed the centurion's servant (**Luke 7:10**), "When those who had been sent out to speak with Jesus returned to the house, they found the slave in good health." God had honored this Gentile's faith by healing his servant.

Peter and the other apostles would have been present at this event. In **Luke 6:13**, Jesus called the disciples to Himself and chose Twelve of them to be apostles (in **Luke 6:14**, Peter is the first name in that list). Jesus then brought them down from the mountain to a level place, where the crowds waited for Jesus to heal all their diseases, cast out demons, preach the good news of salvation, and teach those who believed in Him.

After completing His teaching on the mountain (cf. **Luke 7:1**), Jesus took the apostles and went to Capernaum, where they would encounter this situation concerning a centurion and a much loved slave who was dying.

Peter would, at a much later time, be reminded of the importance of Christ's declaration concerning the faith of this centurion (cf. **Luke 7:9**), "not even in Israel have I found such great faith."

Peter (cf. **Acts 10**) was called by God to go to Caesarea to the house of a man named Cornelius, a centurion, "a devout believer in God, who prayed to God continually, and gave his money to help the Jewish people in his town."

**Acts 10:34-44**, Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)— you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. While Peter

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was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message."

The result was that Cornelius, all his family, and all his servants, repented of their sin and believed in Jesus Christ as Savior, receiving the Holy Spirit.

As we have seen in our lesson today, "God is not one to show partiality," in fact, "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins," (**Romans 1:16**), "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Gentile]."

Jesus came to His own people [the Hebrews] first, but they rejected Him, some of them vehemently. Remember the response Jesus got in His own home town? Rather than believe that He was God's Son, the Savior, they tried to kill Him.

So Jesus went to those who would believe, and He saved them.

**John 1:11-13**, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Whether you are a Jew or a non-Jew [Gentile] the same is true (**Acts 2:21**), "And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," (**Acts 4:12**), "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

**Galatians 3:26-29**, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

**2Peter 3:10-13**, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

**Revelation 21:3-5** says, God will live among His people in the new heavens, on a new earth, "there will no longer be any death or mourning, or crying, or pain; the

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first things have passed away," and God says, "Behold, I am making all things new."

Have you repented of your sins and believed in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? If so, praise God, you have eternal forgiveness and eternal life.

If you have not repented of your sins and believed in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, why not? What are you waiting for? We are all sinners in need of salvation and God turns no one away (**1Timothy 2:3-4**), "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

**John 14:6** declares that Jesus is the only way [*to God*], the only truth [*from God*], and the only life [*with God*]." And all who believe in Him will be saved from sin's curse and spend eternity in heaven with God. Do not leave here today without knowing for sure that you have forgiveness for sin and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

**1John 5:11-13**, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

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