



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

I have always been fascinated by this passage in Luke. Here is a man who is not of the faith, yet who demonstrates a brand of faith not found in all of Israel, according to Jesus. How can this be? How can someone outside the fold of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be considered a person of great faith? How many churches, denominations, and faith groups have declared that those who believe differently are without faith, in other words, bound for hell? Certainly not Jesus, if Luke's account has anything to say about it. The story causes one to wonder; who is in and who is out? Perhaps even one who never stepped into a house of worship, who never read from the good book, who never made a formal profession of faith and became a member of the house of God can still find good standing with Jesus, that is, with God. Someone who was considered unclean, a non-Jew, is nevertheless highly praised for his faith. Think about it.

Consider the Source Luke 7:1-10

Fast forward: Does this story imply for us that church attendance, profession of faith, baptism, confirmation, membership and attendance mean nothing? I don't think so. These are all expressions of our faith and the classic Christian means whereby we grow closer to God along with a community of fellow believers. But I think this encounter with the centurion drives us to a deeper, more fundamental level. I think the story raises the question of what it means to believe. In it, faith knows no boundaries. It is found even in someone who, while no enemy of the faith of Jesus (he actually helped build a synagogue), he himself is not an adherer. But he has heard enough about Jesus to connect Jesus' authority to that of his own in the military. In other words, he gets it, perhaps better than anyone else. He comprehends in the most basic, pure sense the weight of Jesus' authority to accomplish what he commands. With love for his ill slave as his only motive, and without relying on any perceived sense of worthiness because of the good he has done in his community, he simply trusts Jesus' authority alone to do the healing. What a lesson for the church!

— Rev. Van Dickens, Retired Clergy-in-Residence

A Family Affair

Read Luke 7: 1-10 together. In Jesus' day, a Roman centurion was a commander, who would have been in charge of 100 Roman soldiers. He would have been an impressive person with a lot of power and responsibility. Despite his authority, he had a problem that he could not solve. Someone he valued very much was sick and he could not help him. Even though he was a Gentile (not of Jewish faith), the centurion had heard about Jesus healing others. He could have sent soldiers to demand help or sent Jesus lots of money in exchange for his help. Instead, the centurion simply asked Jesus for help. In verse 7, the centurion says "I do not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed."

Jesus was amazed at the faith of the centurion. Even though he held a powerful position, he humbled himself and asked for help because he needed it, not because he deserved it. Jesus wants us to know that we do not need to impress him. We can't earn his favor. We simply need to ask for help when we are struggling, and trust him.

Dear God, there is nothing You can't do! Help us to have faith in You, no matter what obstacles we may face. Amen.

— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry

Monday: Luke 7:1-3

The centurion had heard of Jesus. Interesting, the passage prior to this is the account of Jesus reminding his hearers that faith is more than assent. It is both hearing and acting on his words that come from above. It is faith in action. The centurion knows from being a commander that words mean things. Give an order, and it must be carried out. His were not idle words, nor were the words of Jesus.

- How important is it to do what you say you are going to do? How are you judged by doing what you say you will do?
- How do you determine if people are "good to their word." What does it mean to say that your word is your bond? How was Jesus consistently good to his word?

Tuesday: Luke 7:4-5

The Jewish elders, prominent members of the synagogue, intercede for the centurion. They reason that Jesus should offer healing for the man's gravely ill slave because of what the centurion had done for their community. That is, he's a good guy, or good enough, even though he's not a Jew.

- Do you think Jesus would have been more inclined to help the centurion knowing all the good the man had done for the good people of Capernaum?
- How much is God's mercy predicated on what we've done for God?

Wednesday: Luke 7:6-7

Jesus never even met the centurion, never came face to face with the man! He wants Jesus to know from the start that he himself is unworthy to make the request. Even his home was considered unclean for a Jew to enter. The man made no presumptions. He simply trusted. Shades of communion! "We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own goodness, but in your unfailing mercies. We are not worthy that you should receive us, but give your word, and we shall be healed."

- Do you have the faith of the centurion?
- Where did the centurion get such faith? Where do we get ours?
- What are the qualifications for receiving it?

Thursday: Luke 7:8

In simple military fashion, the centurion defines faith. "I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes..." He doesn't have to see Jesus in action to know (trust) that Jesus will take action. Knowing the authority of the savior is all the man needed to know.

- What is the authority of Jesus? Why are his words "good as gold?"
- What does it mean to "believe?"

Friday: Luke 7:9-10

Now Jesus is the one amazed. He has witnessed the purest form of faith from someone who does not belong to the fold.

- When calamity hits us, or those around us, how does our faith inform how we respond?
- What great things will be done in you (metamorphosis) because of your faith in Jesus? What great things will you do because of your faith in Him?
- If the church had the faith of the centurion, what great things would happen within it (metamorphosis)? What great things would the church be able to do for the world, and by whose authority?