

The Second Sunday of Pentecost

May 29, 2016

**Prayer of the Day:** O God, you rule over all things in wisdom and in kindness. Take away everything that may be harmful and give us whatever is good; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Alleluia! (Psalm 119:105)

**Sermon Text:** Luke 7:1-10

Were you as amazed as Jesus was when you heard our gospel reading? A ranking commander of the mighty Roman army pleads with a Jewish subject to stay away from his house because the commander does not feel worthy enough to stand in his presence. The same commander learned the age-old, rich teachings of the Jewish faith and had probably never witnessed Jesus reach down and heal someone. Still, he confesses: "Just say the word—and my servant will be healed." Is that not amazing?

Would you have said the same thing? "No Jesus, I do not deserve for you to enter my house. I know that my dear one is writhing in pain, growing cold and clammy, is falling in and out of consciousness, and is just hours from dying. But you do not have to stand beside him! I do not need to see your healing hand touch him! All you have to do is say: "Healed!" and I trust your word will do what you said."

In a way, you already say that. When you read your Bible, you are saying: "You have said the word, Jesus, and I trust your word is kept."

Does that sentence roll off your tongue when you take a look at the conflict raging in your world? "Just say the word, Jesus! I am certain you are in control." Does that sentence enter your mind when faced with serious questions about the future? "Just say the word,

**Luke 7:1-10**

<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup> There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup> So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup> That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

<sup>9</sup> When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup> Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Jesus! I know you watch over me, making sure my feet will not slip during life's journey." Or does the sight of troubles challenge the unseen power of God?

It is really a matter of faith, is it not? Faith to trust that Jesus will do the things he promised to do. Some days and in some situations you may not feel like you have enough faith to trust your Savior. It might feel like Jesus would never be amazed at your faith. Yet, **WHAT GREAT FAITH** *that recognizes Jesus is God, that takes Jesus at his Word.*

Right away in our reading, you stand in a place where so many have stood before. **[A] centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die.** Nothing more could be done. Medicine could no longer cure him. Doctors leave, hopelessly shaking their heads. The only action left is to make this servant comfortable, hold his hand, and stay by his side.

Suddenly, exciting, heart-hopping news races through town. Jesus is in Capernaum! He is not too far away!

**The centurion heard of Jesus...** It is not as though the centurion was searching the internet for doctors, stumbled across Jesus' profile, liked what he saw, and sent for him. No, this man who **built the synagogue** believed in Jesus! The only reason he **deserves to have Jesus do this** [healing] is because by faith, God calls him his "son."

This centurion had faith; he *recognizes Jesus is God*. That faith is shaped by what he reads in the Bible. Opening to the very first page in the Old Testament, he discovers the reason why his servant ever got deathly sick in the first place. Adam and Eve had sinned. They stood toe-to-toe with their Maker, held the forbidden fruit in front of his face, and defiantly bit into it. At that very moment, they unleashed sin's curse into the world. Pain entered bodies. Struggle became a sad way of life. Most of all, every life would reach an end.

Sin's consequences raced through every single generation and now played out before the eyes of the centurion. Yet, he knew that God promised to send his Chosen One to crush the serpent's head ([Genesis 3:15](#)). He would be a great Prophet, anointed to preach powerful words! ([Deuteronomy 18:15](#); [Isaiah 61:1](#)) Most of all, the Son of God would never be held down by the bonds of death ([Psalm 16:10](#)).

The Bible described his Savior. The reports this centurion heard about Jesus matched this description. So, he sends **elders of the Jews, asking [Jesus] to come and heal his servant** because this centurion *recognizes Jesus is God*. **WHAT GREAT FAITH!**

You also *recognize Jesus is God*. I assume you do, because you have gathered here today and you are listening to God's Word— and you want to be here listening to God's Word. I see you open your mouth and hear you confess: "I believe in Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered, was crucified, died, buried, rose again, ascended into heaven— and did all this for you. His life matches what the prophecies promised.

Now, you have this high privilege of being joined to the One who holds the entire universe in his hands and can control the entire universe. This is your living, active, always present connection. So, does that mean you never worry? After all, you confess that you *recognize Jesus is God*. If you *recognize Jesus is God*, then it means cling white-knuckled to the promises Jesus, the God-man, says will happen.

If you are anything like me, you are all too aware of how little control you have over things that enter and leave your life. You feel the troubles, suffer the worries, toss and turn during sleepless nights. Does that ever feel like the best summary of your life? Just surviving from day to day? (Doing all you can just to get back into the bed from which you woke up in the morning?)

You know, the devil constantly paints a less-than-glowing picture of your Jesus. He points to the death of a loved as a reason not to trust Jesus. He points to your present-day requests and petitions and whispers that God is too busy to care about you. He compares your life as a Christian today to what your life was like 50, 40, 20, 10, (or even one!) years ago as proof that Jesus has no control over the universe. He combines these myriad of troubles into one picture: that the Son of God cannot do what he promises. That Jesus is not to be trusted.

How easy to believe that lie! So, we may feel exhausted because we trust ourselves to answer death. We may feel hopeless because, try as we might, we cannot advance our wants. We may feel hopeless in a seemingly-anti-Christian society because we believe the lie that Jesus has lost! How often our faith is anything but great!

See what makes **FAITH GREAT!** After all, what made the faith of that centurion so great? Why was Jesus so amazed? It is not because the centurion mustered up the self-willpower to trust Jesus. The centurion did not have an easier time to trust Jesus because he could send direct messages to Jesus and see him. **WHAT GREAT FAITH** he has—all because he *recognizes Jesus is God!*

You see, if you feel that you cannot trust the promises God gives you, the first place to look is not inside yourself. If you feel hopeless, caught in despair, tossed about in this life, look up to the object of your faith.

Like the centurion, you also hold God's very own Word. In it, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell you the Son of God lived in this world— and he lived for you. They write down Jesus' perfect trust in his Father's promises. Even though those promises lead him down a path of suffering and death, Jesus trusts his Father above all things. He dies on the cross, clinging to the promise that his Father will not to abandon him to death.

These Bible writers saw what had happened; John even stood beside the cross of Jesus! Peter and Paul write down that Jesus died and rose again. They tell you what they saw so that you might be confident of this fact. Because Jesus died and rose again, you have full confidence that he did this to make you his child. **GREAT FAITH** starts by *recognizing that Jesus is God.*

The centurion knew that. That is what made his faith great. **WHAT GREAT FAITH** *that takes Jesus at his Word!*

That is why the centurion could say: **“Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”** The Roman Empire gave him authority over a group of a hundred soldiers. If he gives a command, the soldiers will act. They must— because he carries the authority of the Roman Empire. So, he

gives commands and he does not need to check up on his soldiers. In fact, he expects nothing less than that his command is kept.

Jesus is not under the command of the centurion. He is over him. In fact, Jesus' authority rests over all things in heaven and on earth. So, if Jesus says: "Healed!" then Jesus would expect that servant healed because he has authority over health. If the centurion heard "Healed!" from the mouth of God, then he would expect his servant healed.

As a child of God, you have that same **GREAT FAITH** *that takes Jesus at his Word!* Remember who he is— the very Son of God! He is not an angel or a disciple or a great prophet like Moses or Elijah. Jesus sits on a throne reserved only for God. So, when Jesus makes a promise, he keeps and does his promise.

So, your faith trusts God's Word. When trouble whips your heart, the question is not "Why is this happening?" but rather "How is God still showing his love to me?" You may have endured great sufferings in the past, but how did God see you through them? He did he build up your resolve to trust him better? Did he work through this trouble to have good come out of it? Do you see it today? Or, maybe will you see it later?

Through all the troubles you might have faced, God has never heaped the troubles of our sins back on us. Never has he taken back his forgiveness. Never has he finally tossed up his in frustration because of us. He has always stood by with his ever-assuring forgiveness. He repeatedly points to his cross by which he made you his child. For that reason, we continue trusting, we grow bolder, we become content to have Jesus "just say the word."

When God says that "All things are under his control" we trust this— even though it appears God's perfect "control" is not our preconceived expectations of "control." When God says: "I am with you always," we trust this— even though everything around us tries to convince us that we truly are alone. When God says "Ask and it will be given," we trust this— even though it feels like we constantly ask. Sometimes God delays his answers so that we rely and trust in him more. Sometimes God's answers are for our better good. Sometimes God answers in ways in order stretch our faith to better *take Jesus at his Word.*

You may look at the conflict raging in your world. You might face serious questions about the future. The sight of troubles may question the unseen power of God. Some days and in some situations you may not feel like you have enough faith to trust your Savior.

Remember who your Savior is. His Word calls him the very Son of God. Jesus has the characteristics of God; he does the things God does. Your great faith recognizes Jesus is God.

Your great faith takes Jesus at his Word because his Word does the things it says it can do. Jesus said "Health!" and a servant is healed. The Father said: "Rise!" and Jesus rises. Your Jesus says: "Under my authority!" and your world remains guided by your Jesus.

Remain in the Word. Continue setting your eyes on what your Savior has already done as living proof that he has the power to keep his promises today. **WHAT GREAT FAITH!** *that recognizes Jesus is God, that takes Jesus at his Word.*