

The Second Sunday after Pentecost (Confirmation)

Text: Luke 7:1-10 (NIV)

¹When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So 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. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For 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." ⁹When 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." ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.



Theme: What Makes an Amazing Faith?

Today we celebrate the confirmation of 2 of our young people. When we think of confirmation, we think of faith. Faith is a gift that God gives to us in our baptism. Our sins are washed away, and we are reborn as children of God. Your parents nourished that faith ever since you were young. They brought you to worship, even when it was not easy. They brought you to Sunday School, taught you to pray, and read God's Word to you. Today you will confess before all of these people here that you believe in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is our prayer, that you will remain in this faith until your life's end, and that through it God will call you to His eternal glory.

But what makes an amazing faith? In our text today Jesus is astonished at the faith of the Centurion. It takes a lot to impress Jesus. There are several times in the Gospels when people were astonished at Jesus' preaching and miracles, but there are only two places in which Jesus is astonished. The first was at the lack of faith of the people of Nazareth. The second is at the great faith of this centurion. Today I would like to look at what it was about this man's faith that impressed Jesus. What made His faith great?

I. A great faith never bases itself of what we have done.

The Jewish elders thought that the centurion deserved Jesus' help because of his works. Generally the Jews and the Roman occupiers hated each other, but in this case there was a great respect between the Jews and this centurion. He asked the elders of Capernaum to go to Jesus to ask Him to come and heal his servant. When they found Jesus, they pleaded with Him to help this man. The reasons why Jesus should help him are interesting. *They said, "This man **deserves** to have You do this, because He loves our nation and has built our synagogue."*

Think about that statement, "This man deserves Your help because of what he has done." It's still the way that we are tempted to think today. Think of the funerals that you have been to in which it was said that the deceased deserved heaven. What makes us so sure that they are with the Lord? Look at all the good things that this person did. We might even find ourselves counting our good deeds and telling God that He has to help us after all that we have done for Him. We might pray for someone just like these elders did, "Lord, he deserves Your help. Look at all that my friend does for You."

However, when we begin to tell God that we deserve His goodness and mercy, He reminds us that we all live by His grace. Think of the story of the pharisee and tax collector. The pharisee recounted all of the things that he had done for God. Yet, the Lord says that the pharisee did not return home justified. He said, "*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled.*" Jesus didn't say a word to the leaders. He simply began to follow them to the man's house. When they came near the house, Jesus gave them an example of a person who had a great faith.

II. A great faith understands that we are unworthy of God's love, but we are confident of His love anyway.

First, he confessed His unworthiness. When Jesus drew near to his home, he sent friends who said, "*Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I **do not deserve** to have you come under my roof.*" This is in stark contrast to what the elders had just said. They said, "He deserves Your help." The centurion says, "No I don't."

That is what every Christian must confess. In our general confession we pray, "**I a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment.**" Those are difficult words to say, but it is the truth, and it is what we humbly confess to our Savior. We don't deserve anything from God except punishment for our sins. The Scriptures are clear, "There is no one righteous, not even one." If anyone were to say that you deserve God's help, His goodness, His forgiveness or eternal life with Him, confess with this centurion, "No, I'm not worthy!"

But, secondly, the centurion still trusted in the power of Christ's Word for Him. He told his friends to tell Jesus, "*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 centurion knew just how powerful the spoken word can be. When his commanders told him to do something, he did it. When he told his subordinates to do something, they did it. He realized that if the words of mere men could carry such authority, then the word of God would have even greater power. He trusted that despite His unworthiness, Jesus would be gracious to him. He trusted that whatever Jesus said would happen. That is a great faith in God's grace, mercy, and power for us.

It is this kind of faith that I wanted to encourage the both of you with in the verses that I picked for you this day. You both spoke very well on the meaning of those verses earlier. Kali, your verse from Isaiah shows that God has called you by name. He knows you, your even your weakness and your needs. He knows how to help. He has made you His own in the water of Holy Baptism. He will never fail you. You can have that complete confidence in His Word. Cora your verse is a reminder that the power in our lives doesn't lie with us, but with Christ. When we know that He is with us and that He is our Savior, we can always have the confidence of the centurion in our lesson today. I pray that God will bless you both with an amazing faith, one that even Jesus would marvel at.

What makes a great faith? Two things: humility and steadfastness. The centurion had a humble faith, which clung firmly to Christ's promises in His word. May God give each of us of such a faith that is willing to confess our unworthiness before God, but which trusts firmly in His grace and mercy through your Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

**Pastor Don Hougard Benediction Lutheran Church
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