



- **Sermon: “Jesus, King of Faith”**

Luke 7:1-17, 18-35
January 28th, 2018

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A man slipped and fell over the edge of a cliff, but as he fell, he reached his hand out and grabbed a small branch on the side of the cliff. As he was hanging there, the branch began to break. He cried out in a loud voice “Is anybody up there. Is anyone there? Anyone at all”

A voice came back “I’m here”

The man called back: “Who are you? Can you help me?”

The voice replied “I am God. I can help you. Let go of the branch and trust me.”

There was a long silence.

Then the man replied “Is there anybody else up there?”

Faith is when we believe two things:

- **“God is able AND I will trust him.”**

“God is able AND I will trust him.”

Do YOU think GOD is able?

Do YOU trust him?

A Centurion has a servant who is sick.

A Centurion was a soldier of Herod’s who was in charge of 100 men. A Centurion could easily earn himself as much as his 100 men combined. So he was wealthy. And he had lots of Jewish friends because in verse 5 we learn that he built the synagogue for the Jews. Imagine if someone walked in here today from the community and said: “Here’s \$5 million to build a new church! They would probably be wealthy, and they would probably be our friend, right? So the Centurion was wealthy, had lots of friends and was powerful. And one of his servants is sick.

This story today is about FAITH. It’s about how much faith you have in yourself, and how much faith you have in Jesus.

So let me start with these questions:

- **Who are you? And who is Jesus? And who do you have more faith in?**

1. Who am I?

I went to a restaurant once where you cook your own steak. I order my steak, and they bring it out, raw, on a big plate, and give a pair of BBQ tongs and point me towards a barbeque. And I cook.

Now, I don't mind that. There's something great about having the power over cooking your own steak just the way you like it. But the thing is, when I go out to eat, and pay for a steak, I really don't want to have to cook it myself. That's why I pay more and go out for dinner. So other people cook. And they know how to do it. A good chef will usually cook a steak better than I can. So why would I pay to do it myself?

But we do that with so much of our lives. We want the power of independence. We want to do it ourselves. Because we have more faith in ourselves. And maybe we just don't like to ask for help.

But as Christians, God wants us to **MOVE** our faith from ourselves to Him. That's what becoming a Christian is about. Moving our faith from ourselves to God.

The Centurion was a powerful man. But he called on Jesus because he recognised that Jesus had the power over sickness. He recognised that no matter how powerful he himself was, he didn't have control over sickness. But Jesus did.

But he **also** recognised that he didn't **deserve** any help from Jesus.

For some people, life is like going to a theme park, like Wet 'n' Wild. You pay your entry fee at the door and you're entitled to all the rides all day.

We can all give in to this sense of entitlement in our lives. Our culture teaches us that we are entitled to have all the "things". We're entitled to an education. Entitled to a job. Entitled to free speech. Entitled to own a house. I paid at the door and now I want all the things I'm entitled to. Sometimes we ARE entitled to those things. Other times, we just think we **should** be.

When it comes to faith, we can even have that sense of entitlement with God. I've committed to following Jesus so I deserve for him to sort out my life. I've put in my hours of service. I'm entitled to good things from God. I've paid the entry fee. Now I get to ride all day!

But the Centurion says nothing like this.

The Centurion heard about Jesus. His favourite servant was sick. He sends some Jewish friends to ask Jesus to come. And they say to Jesus: "*this man **deserves** to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue*". And Jesus goes back with them. But then it's almost as if the Centurion heard what they said to Jesus about "deserving" to have him come. So the Centurion sends **another** delegation to **stop** Jesus and say "Look, I DON'T deserve for you to come to my house. Just say the word and my servant will be healed."

2. Who is Jesus?

The Centurion recognises who he himself is – a powerful man who commands 100 soldiers. He gives an order and they follow. They do what he says. But he recognises Jesus is superior! He recognises that Jesus is a commander over **sickness**. He humbles himself before Jesus and says: “I **know** your authority. But I also **know** I don’t deserve for you to come to my house.”

He called on the **right person** for help. He recognised who Jesus is. But he also recognised that he didn’t **deserve** Jesus’ help. He humbled himself. He had a faith that said: God is able. And I trust him.

You see, there are the two aspects of faith. To recognise that God is able. That he is powerful. That he is able to do all things. But also that we trust him. We deserve nothing. We are entitled to nothing from him. But we trust him.

We trust that if he says “let go”, then I let go. If he says “hold on”, then I hold on. If I am without, if I am in need, if I ask God and he says “No”, I say “OK”. If my friend is sick, and I ask for healing, and God says “Not yet”, then I wait. Because I trust. I don’t NEED the entitlement of the world, because God is able... **and** I trust him.

3. When we don’t amaze Jesus with our faith...

But this isn’t the end of the story. We can learn a lot from the Centurion. He was a man whose faith amazed Jesus. Is anyone here in that category? Amazing faith?!

- **Video (0:30-1:56)**

But then we have this other story of the widow.

A powerless, helpless widow. She’s lost her husband, and now her only son has died. So she is without hope, because a woman in that culture was dependent on the men in her family for support. She is in a hopeless situation. When Jesus meets her, she’s following the dead body of her only son down the main street.

Verse 13 – “when the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said ‘Don’t cry’.”

He went up and touched the board they were carrying his dead body on, and the dead boy sat up and began to talk.

There was no request here. There was no show of faith. There was just a widow with a dead son and they meet head to head with the compassion of Jesus, **the Lord**. At that moment, Jesus didn’t just raise the **son** from the dead. He raised the **widow**.

In the Centurion, we can see that there is a way to live by faith. Humble ourselves before Jesus. Know that He is able and we can trust Him. We don't deserve his love, but he loves us anyway. But then in this story of the widow, we have an instant display of God's compassion. He just acts.

This is the God we follow. This is the Jesus we worship. He sees our pain and sometimes he just steps in. Maybe you've had those times when so much is happening, and you don't find the time to pray, or you forget, or you just can't bring yourself to talk to God. But God steps in. God isn't sitting up in heaven thinking "If you don't ask me, I can't help you!"

God is compassionate. His heart goes out to us in times of trial, even when our heart is not listening to him.

- **I see two extremes in Christians today when it comes to faith.**

1. I must do more. Pray more. Trust more. I need to bring more to the table. I need to be more like the Centurion. I need a stronger faith. More effort. Or...
2. It's pointless. God is in control. Why bother? He will do what he will do. I'll just go on living my life, go to church, pray, read the Bible. No extra effort. God will do what he will do.

But the truth is, I think Jesus gives us these examples because he wants our faith to be somewhere in-between the Centurion and the widow. He wants us to have faith like the Centurion but there are times he knows we're like the widow and we just need Him to pick us up.

So what do we do?

It would be great to have faith like the Centurion. Aim for that. Amaze God with your faith!

But when you're not amazing God with your faith, remember the widow. God's heart goes out to you. And like the perfect Father he is, sometimes he just steps in and says "Don't cry – It will be OK." He doesn't always fix things. Sometimes he does. Sometimes he doesn't. Why or why not? We don't know. That's why it's called faith. God is able. And I trust him.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we don't deserve all you do for us. We often do not show you a faith that is amazing. So thank you that YOU are amazing to us – that you call us to trust you because you are able. But when we fail and struggle, we know that your heart goes out to us. Thank you for your compassion. But at the same time, help us to strengthen our faith and trust in you.

Amen.

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QUESTIONS of FAITH:

- Who am I?
- Who is Jesus?
- Who do I have more faith in?

When we don't amaze Jesus with our faith...

“when the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said ‘Don't cry’.” (verse 13)

What sort of faith do we need?

- Faith of the Centurion
more effort
- Faith of the Widow
no extra effort