

In the name of our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

After Jesus had finished saying all these things to the people who were listening, he went into Capernaum. ²A centurion's servant, who was valuable to him, was sick and about to die. ³When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they begged him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵because he loves our nation, and he built our synagogue for us."

⁶Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell Jesus, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, because I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I am also a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes; and to another one, 'Come!' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹When Jesus heard these things, he was amazed at him. He turned to the crowd that was following him and said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel." ¹⁰And when the men who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

This is God's Word.

Dear Friends,

Do you have faith? Many people would answer "yes" to that question. But then the bigger question is, "What is the object of your faith?" That is the difference between an unbeliever and a Christian – the object of one's faith. Unbelievers believe and trust in many different things but a Christian puts their confidence and trust in Christ and Christ alone.

Today we are going to look at this example of faith recorded in scripture, we want to make sure we don't give the wrong impression, "Saving faith is saving faith." It makes no difference how much faith you have. Faith in Jesus Christ and all he has done is enough to get any believer into heaven. But Jesus did notice the faith of the centurion and called it a great faith. What made his faith great? Well, we will see that it is: **"An Unselfish faith," "A Christ-centered Faith," "A Humble Faith,"** and **"A Faith which trust's completely in God's Word."**

I. This centurion was different. He was in charge of a group of 50 – 100 Roman soldiers in Capernaum with orders to keep the peace. This was a full time job that required a lot of attention. Men like this centurion did not have time to be bothered with a trivial household matter, such as a sick servant. They usually had someone else to take care of such things. But we find that this servant was highly valued by the centurion. He took time out to care for those who cared for him. His servant was sick. The actions of this centurion show us that this man lived a life that wasn't just centered on himself, but was centered around others.

The Jewish elders he sent to plead for his servant said, **"This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵ because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."** This was so unusual for a Roman soldier to care about others in this way. To love those whose land he occupied – those who normally would have despised him. But this centurion had been touched by God's Word and his faith was evident in his actions. The elders said he deserved to have Jesus come and heal his servant, not because of what the centurion had done but because his actions were an

indication of his unselfish faith. The actions of the centurion did not follow the natural inclination of people.

Paul in his letter to Timothy wrote, **“There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”** (2 Timothy 2:1-4). This describes the natural inclination to center our lives on ourselves and describes our current society. It is easy for us to get caught up in living a life focused on ourselves, rather than letting our faith and love be evident in our actions towards others.

We have the same saving faith in Jesus Christ that the centurion had and the same love of our Savior that moves us to put our faith into action. We have been freed from the slavery of sin to serve. We may not have the resources to build a building but we all have different gifts we can use to serve our Lord and to serve others out of Christian love.

Our Lord provides us opportunities to serve – to put our faith into action. These opportunities become easier to see and easier to take as we keep Christ at the center of our lives. For it is Christ who redeemed us and saved us so that we can serve him by doing what is right, in spite of what those around us might think.

II. This Roman centurion should have been concerned about doing what was politically right. That was the way for him to succeed and to get ahead. But he wasn't worried about what was politically right only in doing what was right. He had the means and the Jewish nation had the need for a synagogue so he helped his brothers in faith – that was the right thing to do. His servant was sick and the centurion knew about Jesus. He knew Jesus had the power to heal his servant who was close to death and so he sent his humble request to the one who could help his servant – that was the right thing to do.

III. The centurion did not know how Jesus would respond. He just made his request, trusting that Jesus would do what was best. I think he was surprised that Jesus would come to his house because as soon as he heard about Jesus' response he sent this message, **“Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷ That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.”**

I am not worthy. I don't deserve your attention. Lord, don't trouble yourself. That is really what the centurion was saying. Do our prayers and requests contain those words? Lord, I am not worthy because I have sinned against you. I don't deserve any attention that you give me. I really shouldn't trouble you with this but.....we do.

It is true. By ourselves, we aren't worthy, but our Savior has made us worthy to bring our requests to God by bringing us into his family. The faith planted in our hearts brings us the righteousness of our Savior and that brings us the privilege to bring our requests to God and that is something our God wants us to do. He tells us, **“Call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you will honor me.”** (Psalm 50:15). We may think our troubles are minor and we shouldn't bother our Savior but he encourages us to **“Pray continually.”** (1 Thessalonians

5:17). To bring everything to our Savior in prayer and he will answer our prayers. Not because we have earned or deserve anything but because we believe and trust in Jesus as our Savior. And as we bring our requests to God, we want to make sure we trust the power of God's Word to take care of these requests.

IV. The centurion recognized the power of God's Word. **"But say the word, and my servant will be healed."** The centurion recognized that he was a Gentile and Jesus was a Jew. If Jesus came to his house he would become ceremonially unclean. He recognized Jesus as the Promised Messiah and he was a sinner. He did not deserve to have God's Son come to his house and his illustration shows us how the centurion recognized the power of God's Word to heal and his faith in that power. **"⁸ 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."** If the centurion could accomplish things by speaking how much more could Jesus do by uttering just one word because his Word was the very Word of God.

This isn't an unusual way for Christians to think. Paul recognized the power of the Word to create faith when he wrote, **"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."** (Romans 10:17). John recognized the power of the Word when he wrote, **"But these [words] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."** (John 20:31). Peter recognized the power of the Word when he followed Jesus command, **"Lord, because you say so."** (Luke 5:5).

God's Word has power! Do we trust the power of God's Word when we bring our requests in prayer? Do we bring our requests with the confidence of the centurion? We have seen the power of the Word to change hearts. Just look around you. You have all been brought to faith through the power of the Word and if the Lord can change your heart, he most certainly can answer your prayers. Don't take your prayers to God as a last resort thinking, "Why not, I've tried everything else." Rather turn to God daily, trusting him to bring you the best answer for the many requests we bring to him.

The answers our God gives us will vary. Sometimes yes – sometimes no – sometimes be patient and wait. But as we look to God's Word to guide us in our lives our prayers will conform more to the Lord's will and as we pray according to the Lord's will, the Lord will answer our prayers in the same way he answered the centurion's.

The centurion had a great faith because he humbly recognized his sinful condition and Jesus as the solution to his sin. He had a great faith because he trusted God and God alone for his salvation. He had a great faith because he reflected the love of his Savior in all that he did. He had a great faith because he trusted the power of the Word.

We too can have a faith like the centurion's faith. Just like the centurion, we recognize we are sinners but also trust in Jesus as our Savior. Like the centurion God gives us opportunities to reflect the love of our Savior and the power of the Word in all that we do. May this example of the centurion's faith move us to trust the power of the Word. May this example of the centurion's faith move us to let our faith shine in all that we do. Amen.