



## BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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# THE ROMAN CENTURION

## LUKE 7

~ **Brent Russell** ~

- We continue our teaching about the **lives of people that Jesus met**
- And in his ministry Jesus meets with a number of quite **diverse people**
- Each one **unique**
- **Each person responding to Jesus in their own way**
- Some **positively** some **negatively**
  
- In all the stories of Jesus meeting with others the one powerful truth comes out over and over again
- **Jesus loves all people**
- **He is no respecter of position, race, colour, creed, status or wealth**
- Jesus loves all people equally
- In every story of Christ meeting with people
- **It is also clear that he meets every person in a different way**
- He understand and responds to their situation
- **Meeting them on their territory**
- There is no fixed modus operandi - **No set formula** which he uses
  
- But each and every person is met by God in a unique and deeply personal way
- The eternal creativity of God interacts with the uncountable distinctiveness of individual people
- **He tailors approach to the person**

### **Rod and I in this process want to help you meet with Jesus**

- As Rod preached week there are some who have not yet really met with Him at all
- They have seen him from a distance but have not met him face-to-face
- But even if we have met with Jesus each of us needs to meet him again in different ways

- **Each of you here today have different needs from time to time and we want to help you meet Jesus in a fresh and new way**
- Last Sunday 6 people met Jesus for the first time
- Perhaps today others will meet Him for the second, tenth or hundredth time but hopefully in a new and fresh way
- Let's turn to Luke's Gospel chapter 7 and read the story of a Roman centurion meeting with Jesus

## **Read Luke 7:1-10**

**Lk 7:1-10** When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 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. 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." 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." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

- The story of the Roman centurion is about healing
- **At one level the story is about healing**
- **But even more than that, the story has at it's centre the faith of this Roman**
- And I believe that there is much we can learn from His lifestyle
- I believe that this man had done certain things that allowed faith to develop in His life
- **I really believe that we can create an environment that allows faith to flourish**
- **That will allow us to faith-full people**
- **Eph 2:8-9** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.
- This passage on faith is the one passage which led Martin Luther to understand that **God expects faith – not good works**
- And brought in the birth of the **reformation**
- A great spiritual revival where the faith of the church grew immensely
- **You see faith is what will save us**

- When you get to heaven there is no question about whether you **knew the scriptures**
- Although in 2 Tim 3 the Bible tells us that the **scriptures able to develop our faith**
- When you get to heaven there is no question **about what good things** you have done
- Although in James 1:17 the Bible tells us that **faith without good works is dead**
- When you get to heaven there is no question about **have you gone to church** to listen to preaching
- And yet in John, Acts, Romans and Corinthians it is clear that **God gives faith through the preaching of His Word**
- **When you stand before God you will be expected to have faith – nothing more, nothing less**
- **Heb 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please God
- **And by God's grace he gives us faith**
- **It is a free gift to those who want it**
- He gives us what we need to get to heaven
- It's like saying to someone I expect that for you to **pass this test** you will have to have knowledge and understanding you will have to know your work
- And then giving them the **answer sheet** when they ask for it
- **Faith is what gets you into heaven**
- **And God amazingly, incredibly and generously gives it to you as free Gift**
- All you do is ask - last week six of you asked and have received this gift of faith
- **And whilst this faith is given to us, I firmly believe that we can do things that help our faith to grow**
- And I believe that we can **do things that destroy faith and stunt it's growth**
- And as we look a little deeper into the life of this centurion there are a number of things that he has done that have allowed his faith to develop
- He clearly has a **deep compassion** for this servant the wording of the English is not overly here
- But clearly this person was **precious** to the centurion
- He wants to help a servant because he cares for the person
- This centurion has clearly been a **good leader**

- A man of **honesty and integrity**
- Who has tried to govern the people in his are with fairness and justice
- **The Jews clearly have deep respect for Him**
- He has been **generous** in helping them build their synagogue
- He has loved their nation even though he is working for a Rome who is occupying this land
- **This is man is good in every way**
- And so much of His lifestyle has been affected by his faith
- But I also believe that much of his lifestyle has affected his faith
- **His faith has grown who he is**
- **His faith has also been grown through who he is**

#### HUMILITY

- **The most powerful thing in this centurions life that allowed him to grow his faith was his humility**
- Humility has been said to be one the of those things that **simply by acknowledging you have it you lose it**
- **In all the things that we do in our lives that stop faith from growing, or kill it entirely pride surely has to be number one**
- And sadly we are taught in so many ways to be proud
- **Pride breeds the belief in our minds and hearts that we can do it ourselves**
- We **teach our children** to be self sufficient and proud
- And at some levels this is a great thing
- But in places it allows us to **believe that we are something that we are not.**
- Pride puffs up and **makes us think we are greater than we are**
- A young woman asked for an appointment with her pastor to talk with him about a besetting sin about which she was worried. When she saw him, she said, "Pastor, I have become aware of a sin in my life which I cannot control. Every time I am at church I begin to look around at the other women, and I realize that I am the prettiest one in the whole congregation. None of the others can compare with my beauty. What can I do about this sin?" The pastor replied, "Mary, that's not a sin, why that's just a mistake!"
- Everything in the centurions life should have allowed him to be proud
- He was clearly **friends with the right people** – part of the in crowd
- He was **wealthy enough to have servants**
- He had enough **money and influence to have built a synagogue** for the Jews

- He was **powerful enough to have many men under his command** – running a successful organization
- He probably had the **BMW model racing chariot**
- **Everything in this man's life conspired to make him proud**
- **Everything showed him that he could be self sufficient**
- **Everything was under his control and within his power**
- **And yet his first words to Jesus are "don't trouble yourself because I do not deserve"**
- **Interestingly in my experience the wealthier people are the harder it is for them to have faith**
- **Wealth breeds pride** – like the **AIDS** virus destroys a body pride reproduces until it overwhelms our faith
- **You see wealth feeds the belief that we can solve our own problems**
- And to some extent this is true
- Money can buy us **lawyers**
- Money can get us **new things** when old one break
- **Wealth can solve an incredible amount of things**
- **And yet Jesus tells us that for a rich person to have faith is like trying to get a camel through the eye of a needle**
- **And he was not talking about a camel cigarette**
- Did you hear about the clever salesman who closed hundreds of sales with this line: "Let me show you something several of your neighbours said you couldn't afford."
- **Wealth breeds pride, jealousy and greed and these things will erode the faith in your life**
- Wealth can get a bunch of things
- Money can't buy you love – all you get is a pretty good imitation
- **You see wealth cannot make you a better person it cannot change you personality for the better**
- **Wealth cannot solve the problem of sin**
- **Wealth cannot guarantee your health - even with all the miracles of modern medicine we cannot control so much disease**
- **And so this centurion despite all he has, despite all the power despite all the influence is a deeply humble man who realizes that there are some things**

**over which he has no control at all – an environment where he has trust in Jesus**

- An atmosphere in his life where faith is allowed to grow
- **I see it all the time you know**
- **People who think they have life all figured out**
- They are **in control**
- They have all the **right people** around them
- They have the **right friends**
- They **live in the right area**
- The **work for the right company**
- They go to the **right school**
- They **drive the right car**
- They are **popular and influential**
- **And they are proud**
- **And then they face something over which they have no control**
- **A financial situation**
- **A medical situation**
- **A spiritual situation**
- **And they have no faith – because their lifestyle has choked it to death**
- **And so when faced with hardship the humble and faithful person responds in a faith creating way: Lord I do not deserve – but please help me**
- **Simply the humble easily and quickly get to a point of saying "Lord help me please!"**
- **The part of the passage where Jesus is amazed is only mentioned twice in the NT**
- And in both instances the word **amazed is tied in with faith**
- The first instance is a negative one Where Jesus is amazed at the unbelief of Israel in **Mark 6:6**
- **Their absolute lack of faith in God**
- **The second time is here where Jesus is amazed by the faith of one outside of the religion of the Jews**
- **And as I have ministered in the life of BPC I have seen people in your midst some of you at worship today who are people of deep, amazing faith**
- And as Jesus meets with you day by day I believe that he is amazed by your faith as he was of the Roman Centurion's faith

- I know that Rod and I are continually amazed by the faith of so many of you
- There are people in this congregation who have had **calamity after calamity** in their lives
- And yet they have **stood steady before God** – believing he will help them
- There are those who have **lost many dear loved ones** over short periods of time, compounding the grief
- And yet they have stood resolute before God – believing he will help them
- There are people who have had to face **mental illness or depression** and all the complications and prejudices that come with it
- And yet in midst of their confusion they have stood before God in faith– believing he will help them
- There are those who **struggle with finances or with their Jobs** battling to keep things going
- And yet they continue to stand firm, steadily before their God – believing he will help them
- **There are those in this congregation for who everyday is a physical, mental or spiritual struggle**
- **And yet they stand firmly in their faith before God– believing he will help them because they know that they cannot help themselves**
- **There are those who believed against the odds that we could do something about housing and find land to help poor have a decent roof over their heads**
- **And they stood before God praying and believing in faith – believing he will help them**
- **And God has been amazed at their faith and has answered their prayers**
- I believe that Jesus is amazed by the faith of people in this church
- And like the Roman centurion they will find their prayers answered

### CONCLUSION

- **2 Corinthians 8:7 the scriptures speak of us excelling in faith**
- Like an **athlete** who trains his body to run vast distances
- He and his coach want him to excel physically
- **We as your ministers want all of you to excel in faith**
  
- We want you to be like this centurion
- **Humble, Generous, Faith-full people**
- Doing the things of life, but living in faith and belief that God can do anything
  
- **Believing that God can miraculously heal the sick among you**
- **Trusting that God can bring life into dying relationships of those you love**
- **Having faith that God can restore shattered hearts and broken minds**
- **Believing with all of your heart and mind that God will resurrect you to eternal life**
  
- **We want all of you to be faith-full people**
- Literally full of faith in Jesus as Lord of all
- **People who will amaze God and the world by their deep and unwavering faith in Jesus**
- People to whom Jesus will respond
- People who's faith will be **spoken of for generations to come**
- People who will reach out God on behalf of others
- **People who do things because they believe and trust that God is able to do all things**
- **People who because of their humility understand that there are some things over which they have no control**
- **People who will respond in a faith affirming way – Lord I don't deserve but we need your help**