

Why Would Someone You Like Seek Someone Like Jesus ?

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Preacher: Pastor Cal Morrison

[0 : 00] Luke chapter 7. He sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.

And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.

And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me.

And I say to one, go, and he goes, and to another, come, and he comes. And to my servant, do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him.

[1 : 28] And turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

Amen. We pray that this word, God would bless it to us. Okay, when there's something wrong, if you drive, if there's something wrong with your car, who do you speak to?

When there's something wrong with your washing machine, who do you phone? When there's something wrong with your body, who do you want to see?

The doctor. When there's something strange in your neighborhood, who are you going to call? The Ghostbusters. Now there's a specialist for every problem.

You wouldn't call NHS 24 if your car breaks down. You wouldn't call RAC if you had a burst pipe in the house. But even when you know who to call, let me ask you this.

[2 : 38] Is a phone call enough? Often not. Can you imagine a mechanic on the phone saying, well, have you tried unplugging your car for 30 seconds?

You imagine the doctor on the phone saying, have you tried rebooting your body? A phone call is rarely enough. You want to be seen. You need to be seen by the specialist. Does anyone know a doctor who can just fix you over the phone?

Doesn't need a stethoscope. Doesn't need instruments. Doesn't need to prescribe any drugs. You just can command your body over the phone to be well and it's done. Imagine that. The thing is as well, money and access are often a barrier.

Money and access are often a barrier to whether you can see a specialist, whether you can get treatment, whether you can get what you need. And so you see this. I don't know if you've ever heard of GoFundMe.

There's GoFundMe pages. Someone has had a bad diagnosis and it means that they don't have enough to pay for the treatment. They don't even have enough to access a specialist.

- [3 : 45] Maybe there's only one guy in Boston or whatever. And so they start a GoFundMe page. Now maybe you wouldn't need that. Maybe if you had money. Maybe if you had status. If you were a rich person. If you were a government official. If you were part of the royal family. Money and access would not be an issue. But sometimes, sometimes even if you do have money, if you do have status, sometimes money and status or any resource are not enough.
- Sometimes there just isn't anyone who can solve the problem. And so this is what we see in Capernaum. This centurion in Capernaum in the first century, he is in the Roman army. He's an officer, a centurion. He's a commander of a hundred soldiers. He's based in Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It's a trading route.
- He sees a lot of people. And he has both money and status. He has authority and respect. He doesn't need to wait.
- [4 : 48] This kind of guy doesn't need to wait 23rd in the line to see the doctor. He doesn't need a GoFundMe page to see the specialist. He has a better chance than anyone else in that city to get the help that he needs.
- He's got a better chance than anyone. Money wasn't an issue for him. He offered to pay and did pay for the building of the Capernaum synagogue, even although he himself wasn't a Jew. Centurions, if you didn't know, were paid up to around 15 to 20 times the salary of a basic soldier in the Roman army.
- A lot of money centurions had. So this centurion was very well paid. And centurions earned a role in battle. They proved themselves to be worthy soldiers and proved themselves to be worthy to command other soldiers.
- And so he was highly ranking, highly paid, highly ranking. And through his own battle experience, his rank and leadership had earned him the authority and respect of the Roman army.
- He knew how to organize and command people with efficiency and success. So he was highly paid, highly ranking, and highly respected. Now, not only that, right?
- [6 : 02] This is just in the Roman world. He also earned this kind of respect and honor among the Jews, which is unusual for a Roman. Romans were the occupying force and Jews.
- Jews didn't like Romans generally. But this guy, this centurion, had earned the respect and honor of the Jews. He had good relations with many people who would pass through. And he not only respected the local religion, he had come to appreciate and support their devotion.
- He loves our nation. That's what the elders say. He loves our nation. This Roman centurion has a good affinity for the Jewish people and their devotion and religion.
- Not only that, he built their synagogue. He funded their religion, their worship. So he was highly respected, even among the Jews. What did this centurion not have?
- He had money, status, authority, favor, both with Rome and with Israel, with the Romans and with the Jews. He was, everything, like absolutely everything was at his disposal.
- [7 : 08] He had soldiers at his disposal, servants, resources, money, and even the Jewish elders were at his disposal. See, he sent the Jewish elders. They were at his disposal.
- Everything was at his disposal. And so what I want to do throughout this short time exploring this passage is just explore three questions. And the first question is, why did someone like the centurion seek someone like Jesus?
- Why did someone like that seek someone like Jesus? Because he didn't face the same barriers that common people faced in a crisis. So why did he seek Jesus?

What does that say about Jesus? Because this centurion, his problem is he's got a servant who's sick at the point of death. Yet this non-Jewish Roman centurion, despite the fact that he's rich, respected, and well-resourced, he seeks out a Jewish ex-carpenter who's swapped his tools for scrolls to teach religion.

What's he doing? It doesn't make any sense at all. Why is someone like that seeking someone like Jesus? Who does he think Jesus is? And back to our original illustration, what does he think Jesus specializes in?

[8 : 31] He doesn't need a carpenter to make a coffin for his servant. That's not what he's seeking Jesus for. Jesus was a very skilled carpenter, but he's not looking for a carpenter. Jesus was a rabbi.

But the centurion's not looking for a rabbi to read his servant, his last rites. That's not why he's seeking Jesus. And verse 3, if you look at verse 3, verse 3, it tells us that he only sent people to Jesus when he heard about Jesus.

Now, that begs the question, does it not, what did he hear about Jesus? What did he hear?

Jesus was a carpenter and then a rabbi. This centurion's got all the money and resources, and he needs someone to help his servant who's sick at the point of death.

What did he hear about Jesus? I wonder how many people even today are in a church because they heard something about Jesus.

[9 : 38] Why did someone like the centurion seek someone like Jesus? If you're here because of Jesus, why did someone like you seek someone like Jesus?

What did you hear about Jesus? Now, he was only seeking Jesus because he heard something about Jesus. People generally don't seek Jesus out of the blue.

They need to hear something about Jesus. It's one thing to remark that people are searching in all the wrong places, but how can they search in the right places unless they hear about it? How are people ever going to realize that Jesus is the way unless they hear something about Jesus?

Now, how great would it be if someone just overheard something that you were saying about Jesus and it spoke to their need?

What is it we're saying about Jesus? What do people hear about Jesus, if anything? Maybe they're hearing nothing about Jesus. Maybe they're hearing the wrong kind of stuff. Maybe they, maybe, maybe.

[10 : 42] I mean, did we ever talk about Jesus and the way that he's changed our lives? Why do people out there think that Jesus is just a good teacher or just a moral person? Is it because of what they're hearing about Jesus?

Now, we don't really know what the centurion heard about Jesus, but in Luke chapter 4, where we were earlier, Jesus was in Capernaum. Jesus was in the synagogue that the centurion built, and he was doing these amazing things.

Remember, what is this word? That's what we read earlier in chapter 4. What is this word? For with authority and power, he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.

And chapter 4, verse 37, and reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region. So maybe that's what he's heard about Jesus. There's this guy who speaks with authority and power.

Maybe that's what he's heard about Jesus. Whatever he's heard, it led him to believe that he was more than a carpenter or rabbi. There's something more going on. So at the point of death, with all the resources in the world but no solution, what does Jesus specialize in?

[11 : 52] What does this centurion think Jesus specializes in? What does our talk say about what Jesus specializes in? Does anyone hear us talking about Jesus?

And if they do, what does it tell them about what Jesus specializes in? Is anyone hearing that Jesus can free us from our slavery to sin?

Because if we're honest, if the world out there is honest, we can all look into our hearts and admit that we are enslaved to sin. Yet, is anyone out there who feels trapped to the things that they are trapped to, does anyone hear that Jesus can free them?

Is anyone hearing that Jesus can forgive us of our crushing debt? Who out there doesn't realize that they need forgiveness? I mean, everyone knows that they're sinners.

They just compare themselves to worse people. But everyone knows that they've done wrong. Is anyone hearing that forgiveness is available? Is anyone hearing that Jesus can clear our condemnation and lift our guilt that we're carrying about every day?

[13 : 02] Is anyone hearing that Jesus can rescue us out of the grave when people are struggling with lost loved ones? Is anyone hearing that? Is anyone hearing that Jesus makes known to us the invisible God who created all things?

Is anyone hearing that Jesus gives us eternal life to those who believe? Now, what happens when someone does hear? And what happens when someone thinks this?

Someone hears about Jesus and they think this. Yeah. That's okay for you, but he won't come to me. I can't afford the specialist.

Who am I? I'm not important. But he won't forgive my sin. He can't change my situation. He can't free me. Maybe he did that for you, but he can't clear my guilt.

He doesn't know me, how dark my soul is. He wouldn't go anywhere near someone like me. I have no status. I've got no money. I've got nothing to offer Jesus.

[14 : 06] I've got no rights. I have no worth. I'm not worthy of Jesus. Why would someone like Jesus come anywhere near me? Maybe Jesus did come, but he didn't come for me.

What happens when someone thinks that? And that leads us to a second question. So firstly, why would the centurion or why would anyone seek someone like Jesus?

Second question. Why did Jesus go? Why did he go? Is it because the elders of the Jews pleaded earnestly? Please, Jesus, please.

Clearly, the centurion had earned their respect and favor. He'd been very supportive, and so they're being very supportive of him. Notice what else they say, though. They say, because of X, Y, and Z, this man is worthy.

Jesus, I know that this centurion is not a Jew, but he loves our nation, and he built our synagogue.

[15 : 09] He is worthy. Because he did this and this, he's worthy for you to have this, for you to do this for him. It's like that they're saying to Jesus, look, I know he's not Jewish.

I know us Jews wouldn't normally do this kind of thing for a non-Jew, especially a Roman centurion. But Jesus, come on, he's worthy. He is worthy. Is that why Jesus went?

You see, the reason they give is because this man, against the odds, has proven worthy in their eyes. He's proven worthy in the eyes of the Jews.

And it's the reason that Jews and elders of the Jews would ever help someone like that. That's the only reason, is because he loves their nation, and he built their synagogue.

He's earned their favor. Surely because of these things he's worthy. Is that why Jesus went? No. It's not. That is not why Jesus went.

[16 : 12] Just because the centurion earned the favor of the Jews in Capernaum, doesn't mean that if you do X, Y, and Z, you can earn the favor of God.

It's not how it works. That's a merit-based system, and that's not what this is about. That's how the world thinks. Keep the commandments.

You do the Ten Commandments, you're good. Go to church every Sunday. Go to Mass. Give to charity. Read your Bible. Pray every day. As long as you live a good life, you'll go to heaven.

That's what the world thinks. It's a merit-based system. Do X, Y, and Z, and God will bless you. People think that it's a merit-based system. Now, every religion out there, most other religions are merit-based systems, but not Christianity.

Not the God of the Bible. The Bible presents a God that doesn't accept that. Because Paul says in Romans, our good deeds are like filthy rags. We cannot do good enough.

[17 : 15] If we have been stained even once, then we've fallen short. Paul says in Galatians, if you break one command, you've broken them all. Okay? We don't find our acceptance with God on the basis of our merit, because we can never be good enough.

We've all fallen short. No matter if all these are good things, and they are good things, none of them make us worthy before God. It's not anything that we do that makes us worthy before God.

So Jesus didn't go because these Jewish elders convinced them that this centurion was worthy. Jesus knew this man wasn't worthy. It wasn't the man's status, or his money, or his love for the nation.

It wasn't because he built the synagogue. And get this. It wasn't even because of his great faith. Because Jesus started to go before he even heard of the man's faith. So, it seems to me, looking at this text, that the reason Jesus went to him was nothing to do with who the centurion was or what the centurion had.

But it was everything to do with who Jesus was and what Jesus had. Verse 6, the centurion says, rightly of himself, I am not worthy.

[18 : 35] See that? The Jewish elders are saying, he's worthy. And the centurion's saying, no, I'm not worthy. I am not worthy. Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Therefore, I did not presume to come to you. He's not worthy. And verse 7, he says, I didn't presume to come to you, even. He's not worthy for Jesus to enter his house, nor did he presume to go.

He didn't presume on the grace of God. You see, this is what happened when Jesus came. The Jews were presuming on the grace of God. Because we are Jews, because we are the descendants of Abraham, you owe this to us.

Presuming on the grace of God. And people in our country do that all the time. All the time. The Jews thought that Jesus should be compelled to help this man because of who the man was. Whereas the man himself knew that there was nothing in himself to compel Jesus.

And so he appeals only on the basis of who Jesus is. The centurion. To him, Jesus isn't merely a carpenter, a rabbi, or even a Jew.

[19 : 42] He is someone who has power and authority. This centurion thinks about what he's heard about Jesus. And he thinks, this is a man of power and authority. This is a man who God listens to.

He can say the word and it will happen. And so he demonstrated that. And he pleads on the basis that this man's God can help. And he casts himself on the mercy of Jesus to be willing to help.

He knows he's able. And he asks him if he's willing. Jesus didn't go because the man was worthy. Think about this. Why did Jesus come to the earth in the first place?

Why did he come to the earth? Was it because humanity was somehow worthy to be saved? Or was it not that it says something about the character of God, that he is gracious and merciful in demonstrating his great love for his own creation, that he would go to the ends of the earth, send his own son to take our place on the cross, because he loves us and wants to redeem that which is his creation.

What did you hear about Jesus? See, this story is consistent with Jesus' reason for coming down from heaven in the first place.

[21 : 01] Not because any of us are worthy, but because of his grace and mercy, and out of his great love he came to seek and save the lost. Have you heard about Jesus? Is this something you've heard about what he specializes in?

You see, our acceptance to God is not from our merit. But by his grace alone, our acceptance from God.

Final question, who is more amazed? There's only two times, two times in the Bible that Jesus himself is amazed. Two times.

One time is the faith of a non-Jew right here, and the other time is the lack of faith of the Jews in his own hometown. This one event is the only time recorded that Jesus was positively amazed.

Yet this centurion didn't even see what Jesus did. He only heard about it. Yet the Jews who did see what Jesus did lacked faith.

[22 : 06] See, he only heard about Jesus, not always about seeing. What faith do you have in hearing? Do we believe the testimony about Jesus? What we heard about Jesus?

What really amazes Jesus is that while the Jews misunderstand the grace of God, this man does understand something about Jesus. And he uses his own experience as a centurion.

And his experience, he says, In the world's most significant army, he knows how to obey as one under the authority of the emperor. He would lay down his life in obedience to the emperor.

He knows, as one given authority by the emperor, that others obey at his command. This was a thing in the Roman army.

They taught the soldiers to fear disobedience more than death. The soldiers feared disobedience more than death. Because they knew what it meant. And so whatever command they were given, they would obey.

[23 : 08] Therefore, he considers what he's heard about Jesus. And he understands that Jesus must have authority from God. When he speaks and commands, he does so with authority. And it happens.

What Jesus says happens. So the question of authority has already been raised in Luke's gospel. In chapter 4, when Jesus is in Capernaum, the people are amazed because his teaching, his word possessed authority.

That's what it says in chapter 4. And so the question of authority has already come up. The people said, What is this word for with authority and power?

He commands. And it happens. The centurion knows something about this kind of authority. What does Jesus specialize in? What does Jesus specialize in?

And this centurion knows that Jesus has authority over spirits, and over sickness, and over death, over everything. Think about the testimony of Jesus.

[24 : 11] The wind and waves obey him. Spirits and sickness obey him. What does not obey him? At his word. He doesn't even need to be present.

He just needs to say the word, and it will be done. Do you know that distance doesn't matter to Jesus? You think about, Where are you, Jesus? I wish you were here right now.

Distance doesn't matter to Jesus. Even where he is, we read it earlier in Hebrews, seated at the right hand of majesty on high. Yet where he is, distance doesn't matter.

Now, if he says you're forgiven, you are forgiven. If he says that you are free, then you are free from sin. If he says that you're going to rise, then what is death?

Now, I know what it feels like when you're in the midst of it. Where are you, Jesus? Think about, just for a very brief moment, think about the person we've not mentioned in all of this account.

[25 : 12] It's the servant himself. Now, in the Roman army, in the Roman culture, you have a servant in the ancient Near East, and he's sick, and he's going to die.

Boo-hoo, I'll just get another servant. What, I mean, talking about the centurion being worthy, this servant, is he worthy? I mean, in society, he's just of no worth.

Thankfully, it says to the centurion, he was valuable. The centurion valued this person's life. But in that culture, he was just a servant. A dime a dozen, you can get them, especially the centurion.

He can get whatever he wants. He doesn't need this servant. He's going to die. Big deal. I'll get another. But to Jesus, to Jesus, this is a life, and life comes from him.

This is a creation of God. This is someone who belongs to him. Does Jesus care about this servant? Yes, he does.

[26 : 16] Does Jesus care about you? More than you know. And sometimes it doesn't feel like it. Sometimes it doesn't seem like it. Jesus cares more than we could possibly imagine.

It's just a matter of time. It is just a matter of time. And distance doesn't matter. He's been given authority. Do you know how sure Jesus' word is? Do you know that being unworthy does not stop Jesus from coming to you?

Do you know that you cannot earn his grace, but he gives it freely? Do you know that your acceptance to Jesus doesn't depend on anything to do with you? But he's gracious and merciful, and he loves you.

He loves you. So much so that he died on a cross for you. Do you know that he's been given authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all that the Father has given him?

He's been raised above all authorities in the heavenly realms. Do you know that all things were created by Jesus on heaven and earth, invisible and visible, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities, they were all created by Jesus, through Jesus, and for Jesus.

[27 : 30] Do you know that with a word the heavens were made? Psalm 33, 6, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the stars by the breath of his mouth. The situation that you're going through, the things that we feel, the things that look powerful in life, whether it's sickness, sin, or death, they look powerful.

Think about this. Our sun, right? The closest star to us. Our sun produces the power of 20 billion nuclear bombs every second, and yet that star was breathed out by Jesus, created by him.

The sun will literally burn your eyes out, and yet people think they're going to freely walk into the presence of the God who created it. This is God we're talking about.

There are more stars in the cosmos than grains of sand on the earth, yet they were all created by the power of his word. His word, Jesus. His word does that kind of thing.

Do you not think his word will free you from the shackles of sin and sickness and death? And while Jesus was amazed at the faith of this centurion, the truth is, the more that we know Jesus, the more amazed we will be at who he is and the power of his word.

[28 : 51] At his word, he calmed the sea. At his word, the spirits flee. With his voice, the dead rise and the mountains tremble, and with a promise, he speaks eternal life to you and me, and it's a guarantee.

Nothing more sure in all creation than his word. The heavens and earth will pass away, but his word will remain forever. Do you know the one who upholds the universe by the power of his word?

His name is Jesus, and he loves you. Whoever hears my voice, says Jesus, and believes in him who sent me has eternal life.

He does not come into judgment, but he passes from death to life. You don't need to be worthy. No one is. You don't need to try and earn God's favor.

No one can. You don't need to rely on anything that you have to compel him. He wants to come to you. You need only look to him, call on him, hear his word, and believe, for he is powerful.

[29 : 55] He can do it. He is gracious and merciful, abounding in love. He will. So those three questions, I just want to ask three questions in finishing. Why would someone like you seek someone like Jesus?

Think about that. For the rest of the day, perhaps, for whoever you speak to, or just for your own reflection, why would someone like you seek someone like Jesus?

If you don't know how to answer that question, then maybe you don't know what Jesus specializes in. And if you do, reflect on what he specializes in. This crushing guilt that I have of my sin, Jesus specializes in taking that away.

The sin that's going to condemn me to hell, Jesus specializes in forgiveness, to free me from judgment. The sin that I feel bound to do, Jesus specializes in freeing me so that I don't need to do it and I can actually live the way that I'm supposed to live.

This darkness that covers me, that prevents me from seeing the world as it is, from seeing me as it is, and from seeing God, Jesus specializes in lifting that darkness by the power of his light.

[31 : 14] And do you know that? He's the only one who can reveal to us our God and creator. He can only reveal to us who God is and what we have been created for.

He's the only one who can heal this world. I might go to the doctors and I might get better, but I'm going to die. Who's the one who can lift me out of death and lift me out of death to a place where I'm not in fear of judgment when I face my maker?

Why would someone like you seek someone like Jesus? Do you know what he specializes in? Second, why would someone like Jesus come to someone like you? Well, it's not because you're worthy.

It's not because there's anything in your merit that compels him. It's because he loves you and he is gracious and merciful. It's because of who he is. And Athanasius, in the second and third century, Athanasius has this wonderful explanation of the incarnation that God said in the beginning that if you eat from this tree of that day you will surely die.

Now, if that didn't happen, it would prove God to be a liar. So it had to happen. This world we live in has to be because God gave the command and far be it from God to be a liar.

[32 : 36] His word must come true. But Athanasius says this also. Far be it from God who created everything. for his good creation to go to ruin at the hands of men and demons.

What does that say about God if he can't just create something the way he wants to? Is God not the greatest power ever? Is there a demon or a person or anything in creation more powerful than God?

No. So why can't God's... Is God's creation bound to ruin? Athanasius says that's a monstrous thing to think that God would want to do something yet would be subject to created things and it go to ruin.

And so Athanasius says God has the power to redeem all his creation if he wants to do so. And he will because it's his good creation and this is who God is. And so, folks, when you are struggling with the fact that you are not worthy, remember this, you are God's creation.

and he is... He is committed to redeeming you because you are his. Whether you're worthy or not is because of who he is and who you are in relation to the fact that he created you.

[33 : 52] Why would he come to someone like you? Not because of who you are but because of who he is and he created you. And who will be amazed in the end? Well, I don't know where you are.

I don't know what your Christian experience or your life experience has been, whether you feel like you've had an amazing encounter with God or not, whether you've seen Jesus or not. This centurion sent for Jesus believing only in his word.

We live in an age of faith, an age of hearing. We live by faith, not by sight. One day we will see, one day all creation, every tongue and tribe will see.

But not only is he willing to come, he is coming again. We live by faith and not by sight, but he is coming again and one day everyone will see. And when we struggle with the fact that he's not, that we're not worthy to have him come under his roof, our roof, because of who he is, he has made a place for you under his father's roof.

He has prepared a place for you in his father's house and he is coming back to get you. Those who have heard about him, those who seek him, those who put faith in his word will see and be more amazed than we can possibly even imagine at this moment.

[35 : 06] And so let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, we have heard something about Jesus.

Please help us to know the truth about Jesus. Please help us to hear the truth about Jesus so that we can respond appropriately and know, know who Jesus is.

Know that he is the only one, the only one that can solve the deepest problems that we have of sin and of sickness and of death. He's the only one who can redeem this world and he's the only one who can redeem our bodies and souls.

And so help us and what we've heard about Jesus to trust in him and to call on him. Help us to understand that Jesus is more than willing to come because he already did come. He came to the earth and came to the cross for us.

Will he not come again to take us to be with him where he is? Help us to trust in Jesus and help us to have this hope within us that wells up in faith to know that we will be more amazed than we can possibly imagine when we do see him in that day.

[36 : 24] We pray in Jesus' name for his glory. Amen. Amen.