

Faith In Action

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, May 18th, 2025. My name is Kent Dixon, and it is my joy to be the pastor here. Because men and women continue to place, thanks be to God, place their faith and hope and trust in a risen Savior, Jesus Christ rose.

And during this series, we've been talking about all the powerful ways in which the resurrection of Jesus changes our lives. So the first week of this series, we learned that it's our faith in Jesus Christ that transforms us into the people of God that God wants us to be.

That faith is demonstrated when we confess with our mouth and believe with our hearts that Jesus is Lord. Amen? Next, we discover that because of the grace of God, we can move past our past. Our sins and mistakes we talked about, they do not define us or even remotely have the last word or the final say in our lives. Yes, only Jesus has that.

Then last week, we took another look at part of the far-reaching efforts of the resurrection. We looked at when God makes us new, we become part of his family, God's family.

[1 : 41] So our sermon this morning is titled, Faith in Action. And for our final week of this series, we're going to find that when God makes us new, we're meant to show his love by putting our faith into action and serving the world around us.

So every one of us has had to make a decision at some point in our lives to make, to trust in something, right? To put our faith in someone or something. A few weeks ago, I talked about sitting on a pew, right?

You are trusting the fact that when you sit down, it will not collapse, right? We trust that. And how many times a day do we trust sitting down on our couch or a chair or whatever or in your car and trust that what you're about to sit on, what you're putting your faith in, is going to do what it's supposed to do.

It's not going to, pardon the pun, let you down, right? So can you relate to having made a decision to put your trust in something? And I'm not just saying in Jesus, that's important too, but just in general.

So in those moments, we had to actually exercise confidence that this person or thing would help us and not harm us, right?

[2 : 54] How many times have you put your faith or trust in someone or something and gotten burned? It happens, right? It does happen. But having faith in the resurrected Jesus means that we can trust him to guide us each and every day of our lives, if we will let him.

It means that when we trust him, he will come through on the promises he has made to us. It means he will accomplish everything he has set out to do.

Does that make sense? Because when we do this, when we exercise our faith, when we put our faith in Jesus, we are made new by the power of God. And this is one of the most important things that underlies all acts of faith.

We must put faith into action. Faith requires action in some way or other. True faith requires action. So the book of Luke offers us this incredible story of faith from an unexpected source.

Let's hear the words of Luke 7, verses 1 to 6. And you can go ahead and look in your Bible. Luke 7, 1 to 6. Bible in the pew in front of you or that you've brought with you or your app or whatever you use.

[4 : 09] Or you can just listen to the audiobook version. When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, who 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 when Jesus went with them, he was not far from the house when the centurion friend said to him, Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof.

In this passage, Jesus is entering into a town called Capernaum. And you've heard that name before. If you've studied scripture, you know it well. It's a prominent place.

And we hear in this story of a Roman centurion who hears of Jesus' arrival to the region. And he instantly comes to find him. So at this time in history, let's take a moment to recognize this, the Romans were, and you probably know this as well, they were the ruling power in Israel.

[5 : 24] So this centurion would have been part of this occupying force in this region. He was also a Gentile. So he had no Jewish heritage, no Jewish lineage, no Jewish genetics.

And yet he comes to Jesus out of desperation because his highly valued servant is sick and on the verge of death. This centurion, we read, then sends the Jewish elders to Jesus to plead on his behalf to come and heal his servant.

So the centurion clearly must have heard all the stories of Jesus' miraculous healings. He must have come to believe that Jesus was his only hope.

And just like him, hopefully we recognize that Jesus is ultimately our only hope for healing. We must put our faith into action then by asking him to heal and to make us new.

Putting your life into Jesus' hands may feel like a leap of faith, right? Quite literally, a leap of faith.

But we can trust that Jesus will catch us.

[6 : 34] Have you had him catch you in your life? Isn't that a great feeling? To go, okay, Lord, here I go. Right? And ka-chunk, he's always got you. Always. I once read about a house that had caught fire.

So in this terrible situation, there was a young boy who was forced to flee to the roof for safety. The little boy's father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, Jump! I will catch you!

He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. But all the boy could see, however, was flame and smoke and blackness and terror, probably.

And as we can imagine, he was afraid to leave the roof. Even though his life was in danger. His father kept yelling, Jump! I'll catch you! Jump! I'll catch you!

But the boy protested, Daddy, I can't see you. But the father replied, Trust me. I can see you. And that's all that matters.

[7 : 37] Such a powerful example of true faith, isn't it? Many of us have a tendency to trust in ourselves. Right? Trust and think that, oh, we can do life.

I can do life on my own. I've done this before. I kind of messed it up. But I can do it again and hopefully not mess it up as badly. But ultimately, we can only, we only find that Jesus is our true hope.

And it requires us to step out in faith. We can't truly live an energized, active Christian life sitting on the sidelines.

Right? True faith believes that Jesus can do anything. So we recognize from our passage this morning that Jesus follows the elders to the centurion's home to respond to the request he's made to heal his servant.

But before he can make it to the house, Jesus, the centurion sends a message to him. Let's turn to Luke 7, verses 7 to 10. You see it on the slide there. Luke 7, 7 to 10.

[8 : 42] This 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 this 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 turned 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 message brought to Jesus is that he doesn't even need to enter or even show up at the centurion's home to perform this healing miracle. The centurion believes what he hears is true about Jesus.

The centurion in humility doesn't consider himself worthy to even have the Savior come to his house. The centurion in faith knew that all Jesus needed to do was say a word, even from a distance, and the healing would happen.

[9 : 57] The centurion believed this, we get the sense here, because he understood authority. What it comes down to, right? That's what the centurion is saying.

He recognizes authority. He had faith in the authority of Jesus to simply command the sickness to leave, for the servant to rise up, and it would happen.

True faith has the confidence that Jesus can do anything, that there's nothing outside of his scope of power. Do you truly believe Jesus can do anything?

If we have sincere faith that Jesus can do anything, it really should change our perspective, right? It should change our approach to everything, shouldn't it?

It should ease our anxieties and our fears. It should give us unshakable confidence. When our marriage begins to struggle, we should go straight to Jesus and ask him to change the relationship.

[11 : 00] When we have an addiction that we struggle with, whatever kind, we should go straight to Jesus and ask him to help us have victory over it. When we find ourselves in a place of darkness or depression, we should go straight to Jesus and ask him to speak a word of light into us.

You've heard me say it before, I struggle with depression and anxiety sometimes. My challenge to you is when you feel down, ask Jesus how he feels about you and then be quiet and listen.

It's pretty amazing. Do you believe Jesus can do anything? It's kind of rhetorical, but say it, yeah.

The centurion did, right, in this story.

He trusted Jesus had the authority to make a difference in his life and in the life of his servant. In 1893, an engineer named George Ferris built a machine that bears his name.

Any guesses? A plus. When he finished, he invited a newspaper reporter to come to accompany him and his wife on an inaugural ride.

[12 : 17] Anybody scared of Ferris wheels at the best of times? How about the first trip? We're going to go real high in the air, very slowly-ish. So it was a windy July day, history tells us.

A stiff breeze struck the wheel with such great force that it slowly began its rotation. Despite the wind, the wheel turned flawlessly. After one revolution, Ferris called for the machine to be stopped so that he and his wife and the reporter could step out.

In braving that one trip on the wind-blown Ferris wheel, each rider showed genuine faith. Ferris began with the scientific knowledge that the machine would work and that it would be safe.

Mrs. Ferris and the reporter believed the machine would work on a basis of what the inventor had said. See the slight difference there? But only after the ride could it be said that all three of them had a personal and experiential faith experience.

Can you see that? Faith had been proven by experience. Living a life of faith means that we trust the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus.

[13 : 38] Despite the storms and troubles of life, we trust that we can rest securely in him, that his word is good. When Jesus hears the confidence that the centurion has in his power, the Bible says that he is amazed.

Jesus is amazed. Isn't that wonderful? And then we learn that the men, when they return to the centurion's home, they're actually shocked to find that the servant had been healed.

See the different reactions there? Remember, Jesus is amazed and actually says that the faith of this one man, this centurion, Gentile, non-Jewish person, has such faith that his faith stands out among all the people of Israel.

And Jesus is moved by it. True faith joins God in serving the world. Here's the action part. True faith isn't just believing that Jesus is coming to do something in our lives.

Put a pin in that for a second. It's also believing that Jesus can and will do something through our lives. You see that? It is a solo experience, but it's a solo experience that has ripples beyond us.

[14 : 56] The book of James speaks to the importance of having an active faith. I already hear pages turning. Let's hear the words of James 2, 14 to 17, if you want to turn there. James says, What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?

Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, Go in peace, keep warm and well fed, but then does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. Strong words. The author begins by asking an important question.

What good does it do to have faith without then having the kind of service or action or works that should accompany it, that should flow out of it?

The example that's given, really, right here, is seeing a need around us and doing nothing to help meet that need. James would consider it, in his words, worthless faith, ultimately a dead faith.

[16:10] That's pretty harsh. So, this is the part where I want to be crystal clear. Let me be clear. I am not talking about somehow needing to work for or earn our salvation because there is nothing we can do to earn it.

This is about the action that should flow from a deep love and gratitude for what Jesus has done for us on the cross and for God's unwavering love in and for us.

Our passage of James talks about dead faith. So, I read a quote that might help us to better understand that concept. Dead faith is the kind of faith which would lead a person to take a bottle of medicine from the medicine cabinet.

Looking at the instructions, they then say, I'm sure this is correct. I have all the confidence in the source of the medicine, the doctor, the pharmacist, whomever. I know who wrote these directions. I believe everything about it. I know this will relieve my headache, my pain, whatever, if I just take it. Take your medicine, as the saying goes, right? But then they put the medicine bottle back on the shelf without taking it.

[17:24] Yeah, I know that'll work and I'm just going to leave that there. The headache is never remedied. The pain continues and persists. That person may say they believe in that medicine, in theory, right?

They believe all about that medicine. I googled it. It's good. Yeah, I think, yeah. My doctor always says, don't ever, he said, I know you're a research guy. Don't ever go online.

He said, here's your limited checks. WebMD, Mayo Clinic, Dixon, that is it. You're banned from searching anything else. So people do their research, right?

They believe all about the medicine, but still they won't take it. That is dead faith. The world around us is in desperate need of people of faith.

People like the centurion who believe that all Jesus has to do is speak a word and his will will be done. But the world also needs people whose faith leads them to reach out in concern and service to other people.

[18:30] People who need help. People who need encouragement to be seen, to be loved, to be accepted. So many other things. We are made new by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

But not just for our own benefit. The buck does not stop there. We are made new for the benefit of all people around us who are broken and in need.

Our faith should play out in our generosity. Our faith plays out in our service. Our faith plays out in our sacrifices. Faith in works really are, I heard this cool little illustration, and I think this is important.

Faith really works like the two feet of any person. We should approach our journey with Christ by taking steps. One with the left foot of faith, then a right foot of works, and if that word freaks you out, action.

Left foot, then right foot. Until as famous pastor William Booth once said, the two cannot be distinguished from one another. This coming week, let's strive to keep our eyes open for opportunities to serve other people around us with the expression of our faith, with actions that bring glory to God and honor Jesus.

[19:59] As we wrap this series today, let's take some time to reflect upon the finished work of Jesus on the cross and the miracle, feels like a long time ago, of Easter morning.

The empty tube, yes, is an annual reminder that fullness, true fullness of life can be found in Christ. The life of a disciple is anything but empty.

It is an empowered life. It should be an exciting life, and even at times, a dangerous one. How can you live full of faith this coming week?

How can your actions and deeds align with and reflect your faith? Ask for opportunities and step into them.

How can you move beyond your past and take your rightful place at God's table as a member of his family? Is there anything holding you back from any of those things I've just talked about?

[21:01] If so, take it to the feet of Jesus today. Don't wait. Hebrews 4, verse 16 gives us such amazing words of encouragement. Hear this.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. My friend, take hold of God's call to you to join him on mission.

Serve your friends and your family. Serve your community and your city. be Jesus to a world that so desperately needs him. Amen.