Luke 7:1-17

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 April 2014

Preacher: David Helm

[0:00] After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him.

When the centurion heard about Jesus, 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.
[1:07] And turning to the crowd that followed him, 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.

Soon afterward, he went to a town called Nian, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him.
As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother.
And she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, do not weep.
Then he came up and touched the beer. And the bearers stood still. And he said, young man, I say to you, arise.
And the dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all. And they glorified God, saying, a great prophet has arisen among us.
[2:15] And God has visited his people. And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. This is the word of the Lord.

To God. Well, I want you to know this morning that no one is beyond the reach of God's love.
And also that no one and nothing is beyond the power of his restoring commitments. Two paragraphs.
Two stories. Two people. In one sense, to give us the fullness of humanity. The first, a story of a powerful man.
A centurion. Who discovers that he is not beyond the reach of God's love. The second, a story of an impoverished woman.
[3:39] To demonstrate that there are no depths to which he will go to meet the needs of his people. From the greatest to the least.

To those who possess most power. And those who are powerless. Jesus. Jesus. Is capable of meeting their need.
And as we walk with him. I pray that. It will encourage you. To know that. He. Can. Walk.
With you. Our Heavenly Father. We look at these two. Units of thought. Put down by the pen of Luke. And we ask that you would minister to each one here.
In Christ's name. Amen. Interestingly, for the previous three weeks, we've been listening to Jesus speak.
[4:41] He has been talking. Now. We move. We move. For he is now. Walking. You can see it there in 7.1.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people. He entered Capernaum. Or again. As the narrative changes in verse 11. Soon afterward.
He went to a town. Called Nain. The movement is clear. We who have been audience. To his speaking.
Now become entourage. In his living. Oh. To walk. With Jesus. Today we do.
And this is what he's like. He entered into a town of Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant. Who was sick. At the point of death. Who was highly valued by him.
[5:45] When the centurion heard about Jesus. He sent to him elders of the Jews. Asking him to come and heal his servant. And he came.

Capernaum. We had been there earlier. Hadn't we? In chapter 4. Jesus said. Healed a demon possessed individual. In the midst.
In the midst. Of the synagogue. In Capernaum. Archaeologists have. Confirmed for us. That Capernaum. Which sits on the north end.
Of the Dead Sea. Would have been. A little fishing village. About 1500 people. When I think of fishing villages. I think of.
Of my days in seminary. In seminary. North of Boston. And taking a short ride. Up the coast. And seeing Gloucester. A fishing village.
[6:41] Is a working man's town. No pretension. Working men. And women.

No heirs. About them. Such was. Capernaum. Home of Peter. And indeed. James and John. No wonder. They were so. Flowery.
With their mouth. And so. Ordinary. In their ways. They were. From Capernaum. This town. Only about 1500 people. Stone. Homes.
Local stone. From the. Area. Single story. As we now. Know. Wood thatched. Roofs. Cobblestone. Floors. And there.
Was a centurion. From the Latin. Centuria. Or. You just think of. A century. A Roman.
[7:36] Military man. Not. Enlisted. At the lower levels. But one who has risen. To what. Would be commensurate. In our own army. As a. A captain.

He had responsibilities. A hundred. Other. Soldiers. Under him. Evidently. A man who had been. In battle.
And knew. The ways. Of the world. And. Had risen in the ranks. So that he was a man. Among men. And a leader of men. Powerful man.
In this. Simple. Fishing. Village. By the time we're. Introduced to him. Jesus had already been.
In his. City. That earlier. Recollection. Of the healing. Of a demon. Possessed man. That time. In chapter 4. Where. The people. Marveled.
[8:34] At the ministry. Of Jesus. And now he hears. That Jesus has come again. And he has a servant. Who's sick. Not only sick.

But on the threshold. Of death. What's Jesus like. With such men. Of the world. Interestingly. Look. What he does. He sends. First. An envoy. Of Jewish leaders. But then he will send. In verse 6. A delegation. Of friends.
Here come the envoy. Of Jewish leaders. When the centurion. He heard about Jesus. Verse 3. 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's 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.
[9:32] With them. He sends. These refined. Religionists. Who actually. Had probably been present. When the demon. Possessed man. Had been healed.

These weren't men. At this point. Who were naturally. Opposed to Jesus. They were enthralled. With Jesus. And the centurion. Knew.
The basic principle. Of life. Namely. Social capital. He had funded. As a private endeavor.
Their ability. To have a public synagogue. A Roman man. In the midst. Of a city. Providing. For.
An expression. Of religious thought. Namely. The Jewish. Religion. And so he. Doesn't mind.
Working. In the language. Of social capital. I've done many things.
[10:28] For you. You know. I'd like you to go. Talk to Jesus. For me. And see if he'll come. And help me. With what. I cannot do. Even with all my own power.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

For even the. Powerful men of the world. Have. Limitations. On them. And here was one. Interestingly.
Jesus goes. He doesn't mind. Getting tangled up. In social capital. He doesn't mind.
Assisting those. Who had assisted those. To whom others benefited. Social capital. According to that.
Great. Online. Wikipedia. Source of all information. Is the expected. Collective. Or economic benefit. Derived from the preferential.
[11:24] Treatment of cooperation. Between individuals and groups. And that's what this man. Banked his hope on. That there might be. An expected. Collective benefit. Based upon. Some preferential treatment.

Which I have done for you. Therefore. Quid pro quo. In this case. The social capital. Is in play. By a collective group. Seeking preferential treatment.
For an individual. On the basis. That he had done something. For them. They say. He's worthy. Of this. This man. Now. I know you might not think well. Of all powerful men.
But this man. Is unique among men. And he's worthy. For he's actually benefited us. And Jesus. Goes. This tells me something about Jesus.
He makes investments. In the world. In which you and I live. He has no fear. To get tangled up. In doing good.
[12:20] Even if it. Collapses him. Into a world. Where it looks like. There's preferential treatment. Being given. He went.

Imagine. Instead. What would have happened. If Jesus had withdrawn. Ah. I'm a spiritual man. Not a military man. And. And on spiritual grounds.
I will not. Muddy myself. With the way. In which the world works. No. He's in. He's capable.
Fully capable. Of living as a man. Of integrity. And walking in the mud. And so. Should the church. Be today. Rather than.
It's high. Minded. Separatist. Mindset. A fully. Orbed. Cultural. Engagement. In an effort. To procure.
[13:22] Love. Even to those. Who don't operate. On your. World. View. If he had withdrawn.

The world. Would not have been. A better place. And as Christians. Withdraw. From any. Dual. Citizenship.
While the world. Is impoverished. As a result. True. Spirituality. Walks. Into the world.
With the love. Of Christ. To meet. The needs. Of those. Regardless. Of their present. Condition. If he had.
Isolated himself. He would have. Gone off. Mission. And if the church. Encapsulates itself. Only within those. Who work. The way they work. Well she is no longer.
[14:15] Missional. And so here's Jesus. On his way. To extend love. To powerful people.

Who work. The way the world works. The archaeologists. Have told us. Those who have been in. Capernaum. In the 19th century.
That there were two synagogues. One. Built right on top of the other. Wow. I'd just love to know. If one of them. Was the one that this man funded.
I mean. The possibility. Actually exists. That you today. Can get on a plane. And go somewhere. And see. The. The. The cultural benefit. Of a man's.
Private giving. That religion. Would have a space. In his city. Two synagogues. And he goes.
[15:17] Now. After the envoy. Of Jewish leaders. There's a delegation. Of friends. I don't know exactly. If he changed his mind. Along the way. Or what. But when you get to 6B. Something has shifted.

When he was not far. From the house. The centurion. Sent friends. Saying to him. Lord. Do not trouble yourself. For I'm 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. Unto 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. He heard these things. He marveled. And turned to the crowd. That follow him. And said. I tell you.
Not even in Israel. Have I found. Such faith. Not only an envoy. Of Jewish religious. Leaders. But rather. Now. A delegation. Of friends. My guess is.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[16:10] These were the military men. I mean. Soldiers hang with soldiers. On off hours. Jesus. And so all of a sudden. These guys in the.

The Roman army. Begin to make their way to Jesus. To in a sense. Halt his progress. Toward the home. All because the man.
Understands. Authority. I don't need your presence. In my home. Say the word. And I know that my servant. Will be healed. What a stunning moment.
From a Roman centurion. Wow. Says Jesus. I don't see this faith. Even back in the synagogues. And what a contrast. Between this man. And Naaman. In the Old Testament. Another military man. Who was first. Had a problem.
[17:15] He needed dealt with. His own leprosy. And the word. Of the prophet. Came to him. And told him what to do. And he was offended. By it. Because he assumed. That the holy man. The man of God.

Would want to have office. Audience. With him. The great military leader. Until his own servant. Said to him. Why do you.
Why do you. Concern yourself. With having to get into. The pastor's study. Why don't you just. Do what he told you to do. And you'll be healed. And eventually. Naaman does. But what a contrast here.
What a man. Dear Lord. I'm a man of the world. I have immense needs. I have things. I cannot control.
And I look for your love. And mercy upon them. Speak the word. And work in my life. And in the lives of those. That I love.
[18:13] Interesting to me. The goal. Is that Jesus. Would simply. Command. It's a perfect compliment.

To what Jesus. Had rolled out. That scroll. In the town of Nazareth. In Luke 4. Where he said. I've come to. Bring liberty to the captives. To set the oppressed free. And that.
In Luke 4. The quote of course is. The question is. How does he set them free? How does he heal? And it's through the proclamation. Of his word. So liberty comes.
As a word goes forth. This man got that. And he asks. For it. For it. For it. I don't know.
Perhaps you're a person of power. Here today. I want you to. Be reminded of my opening word. Nobody. Nobody. Is beyond. The love. And reach.
[19:11] Of Jesus. Even those who have great power. In this world. He comes for them. And then beautifully. Eleven and following.

He not only comes for the great. He comes for. Those. Who are the smallest. Among them all. Soon afterward.
He went to a town. Called Nain. And his disciples. And a great crowd. Went with him. And he drew near. To the gate. Of the town.
Entering Nain. I mean. The picture you're now given. Is of one. Jesus. As a rising star. On the Galilean. Scene. He has an entourage.
That is in full orb celebration. And they are crowding around him. Entering into what is a very small town gate. In other words.
[20:12] You are to picture. A lively. Bunch. A post party scene. On the road. To the next stop.

And then. Luke. With incredible intention. In verse 12. Places a word. Behold. As if to stop. The reader's eyes. To take your eyes off of Jesus.
For a moment. And all that he is. As he arrives at the gate. And he refocuses your attention. On a man. Who had died. Being carried out.
The only son of a mother. And she a widow. And a considerable crowd with her. I mean. This is the scene. Collapsing on that little gate in Nain.
Is Jesus and his entourage. On the road show. Entering into a new venue. And at that very gate. Behold.
[21:14] One who grieves. One who has lost. One who weeps.

One who's a widow. One who has no status. No social standing. No means of supporting herself. Carrying out her only son. And Jesus. Is there for her. Too. We see now then.
By way of contrast. The fullness. Of the kinds of people. Who are the objects. Of Christ's love. Do you grieve?
Do you weep? Have you lost? Blessed. Blessed are you who weep. Now. For you shall laugh.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[22:30] Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry. Now.

For you shall be satisfied. The heart. Of Christ. Christ. Rises up. Into the world. That works through social capital.
And collapses down. Into the belly of the earth. Where there is no social standing. What.
A picture. Of love. Which indicates to me. That he can walk with you. Look at his compassion.
Verse 13. When the Lord saw her. He had compassion on her. And said to her. Do not. Weep. The heart of Jesus. Goes out. For those.
[23:32] Most especially. Who are undergoing. Great loss. That's his heart. When you sit.

Alone with your thoughts. At the end. Of a day. With the sense. That you're not quite sure.
How you keep moving. Behold. He's at your gate. He comes across. Your threshold.
He places his eyes. Upon your condition. And he has compassion. And he says. Do not weep.
Not because he does not know your loss. But because he knows. What he can. Bring. He will meet you. At the gate. Of your suffering.
[24:29] And cross. The threshold. Of your despair. And minister to you. Notice how. By the power. Of his word. Again.

Just like the centurion moment. It is all done. Through a word. He comes. He touches. The bear.
And the bear stood still. And he speaks.
Young man. I say to you. Arise. And the dead man sat up. And began to speak. You.
Who weep today. Need to know. That it is Jesus's nature. It is the nature of God. His eternal nature. To have mercy.
C.H. Spurgeon said. If misery. Be qualification for mercy. Then I am a fit object. For thy compassion. Yeah.
[25:27] Well. You can steal Spurgeon's line. And put it in your own lips. If misery. Be a qualification. For mercy. Then I am a fit object.

For thy compassion. And what do you need. Today. What can I give you. The word of Christ. Christ. Now.
It doesn't mean. That he heals. Every sick person. Or dead person. In Nain. My guess is. There was a funeral. In Nain. Later that week. For somebody else.
It doesn't mean. That he will necessarily. Relieve. Every aspect. Of your human. Conditional suffering. But it does mean. That you know. He's capable.
Of bringing. Any. From the dead. Indeed. That's the promise. Of the gospel. That your greatest need. Is not beyond.
[26:22] His reach. That that which is dead. May live. And may it be so. For you.

And for me. And how does he accomplish it? With. A. Word. And the dead man. Sat up. And began to speak. And Jesus gave him. To his mother.
Look what happened. Fear. Seized them all. I bet it did. I haven't been to a funeral. Like that. Fear. Seized them all. But then secondly. They gave glory to God. They gave glory to God. In two ways. Two lines. A great prophet. Has arisen among us.
And God. Has visited his people. They began to know. Even these individuals. Who were. Living in the region. That Elijah. Ministered into. Centuries before.
[27:17] The same region. Where Elijah. Raised. The son. Of a widow. That one. Like Elijah. Or one even greater than him. Is here. They began to glorify God.

For they knew that God. Was active in the world. Reaching down. To the impoverished. And those without power. And meeting their needs.
Notice. In both pictures. We're not even looking at what Jesus does for an individual. But he's looking at what he does for individuals. Who are mourning other individuals. It's not just.
Meet my need. It's meet what grieves me concerning others needs. And he responds. It isn't just that he talks to them in their well.
Well. Their hearts are already going out for other losses. And so too. For you. And me. Here. The principle is clear. For whom.
[28:14] Do you weep. For whom. Are you vested in. And you're concerned about their life. For whom.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Does your heart break. Outside of. Merely looking at the mirror. And asking God to do for you. Imagine what happens. When your heart begins to break for others.
And to know that even there. God. Ministers to them. As he looks upon compassion. To you. Now. Walk that out.
Reflect. This afternoon. Lord. Who should my heart be gripped with. Concerning their own condition. And Lord. Meet their needs.
And your voice rises to him. And he looks to you. And he works to them. Through the power. Of his word. Isn't that beautiful?
[29:16] This is it. No one. No matter how great you are in this room. Nor how small. No one. Is beyond the reach. And love of Christ. And nothing.

Nothing. Not even sickness. Or death. Is beyond the scope. That he's capable of fixing. Well. Jesus. Now. Jesus. We've heard him talk. I watch him walk.
I want to come to him. And find strength. Our heavenly father. As we prepare now. For the Lord's table.
We know that you. Have walked. With us. We pray oh lord. That as we stand. And wait. To have audience with you.
[30:26] Through the celebration. Of the sacrament. That you would indeed. Minister to us. To each one. This morning. In accordance.

With their need. And as we see. One another. Visually. And we see. The stations of life. Pass before us.
In these lines. And we know. The needs. That are embedded. In the heart. Words. Unspoken. May you meet. With each one.
Who comes to you. By faith. And may you nourish. Protect. Guard. Strengthen. Restore. Heal. According to the power. Of your word. Through the death. Of your son. In whose name we pray. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host