

Healing of a Slave

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[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 30th of June 2002. The preacher is Paul Dudley.

His sermon is entitled Healing of a Slave and is based on Luke chapter 7 verses 1 to 10. Father we do indeed thank you for your word.

Father we thank you that you have communicated how that we may have a relationship with you. Father we pray that you open our ears and our hearts tonight that we may hear it clearly and that we may be people of faith putting our trust in you.

We pray this in your son's name. Amen. Who are the people that have been great examples for you? People that you looked at and admired.

I thought I'd tell you about a few of mine who have been some of the people that I've admired during my life. The first is Rick Charlesworth.

[1 : 07] Does anyone know who Rick Charlesworth? Yes? Close but not close. He was the captain. He was vice captain and captain.

He was captain. He was one of Australia's greatest hockey players. Rick Charlesworth. He was a hero of mine. I used to always want to be in the Australian hockey team. I really wanted to be there. And he was just fantastic. I admired his skill. He was a person that I tried to follow his example. I wanted to be in the Australian hockey team.

Another one of the people that were my examples, the people that I admired was Cliff Young. I don't know if you've ever seen Cliff Young, the shuffler, who won the Sydney to Melbourne run. I admire his stamina in running. I'd love to have that. I admired it. I thought it was great. One of my other great people that I admired was Sir Edmund Hillary.

[2 : 07] His spirit of adventure. I've got books on my shelf of how I really wanted to climb Mount Everest. But I just don't think I'm going to get there anymore.

But I'd love to have done that, to climb Mount Everest, to have that climbing ability that he had. Another one of the people that I admired was Ian Powell.

He's a preacher in Sydney, one of the finest preachers I think I've ever come across. I'd love to have his ability at preaching. One of the other fine examples in my life that I really admired was my father also.

I still do. Just the way that he's able to make and fix anything. It's just fantastic. I'm not quite as good as him, but I'd love to be able to be just as good as him.

These are some of the examples and people that I admire. Who are some of the people that you admire? Examples. People that you look to, that you hold up and say, now there's a good person. I want some of that.

[3 : 09] I want to be like that. Who are some of the people that you admire and want to be like? Well, today in today's Bible reading, we have a person that is put up there as a person to be admired.

A person who is an example for us to follow. And he's a centurion. Now, I don't know if you know much about centurions. I guess for me, when I think of centurions, I think of movies like Gladiator or some of the old chariot races that you see with the Roman centurions and all the guards and the Roman Empire and that type of thing.

Well, here we have a centurion being put up as an example to follow. We know from history records that a centurion was a commander of about 100 men.

He looked after about 100. He was normally a Gentile. That means he wasn't a part of Israel, part of God's chosen people. He was a Roman citizen and he was there to keep the peace amongst the Israelites.

At this time, Rome has spread out its empire over all the land. And so here we have this Roman centurion. Well, when we look in the passage tonight, we learn more and more about this centurion and we're going to look at him and why he is to be admired.

[4 : 28] So let's have a look at it. You might like to have your Bibles open at Luke chapter 7, page 839. In verse 1, the first thing we know about this centurion is he's at Capernaum.

Verse 1, we see that Jesus has just entered Capernaum and this is where this centurion is living.

Now, Capernaum is on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Now, you'll just have to use your imagination as I describe this, but if you have Israel is this big block here. Now, Galilee is this area up the top of Israel and there's a sea called the Sea of Galilee. Well, Capernaum is at the top of this sea, the northwest corner of this sea. And it's quite an important city of the time. Its economy is agriculture and fishing.

It's a major Jewish centre. It's a place which Jesus centred his ministry around. Now, why do I give you these details? Well, I think often when we read these accounts in the Bible, we tend to forget that this is a historical account of a real place and a real time.

[5 : 40] So what it says here that Jesus entered Capernaum, he entered into this real city, a city that had agriculture and fishing. It was on the Sea of Galilee.

He was a real man in a real place. I think sometimes we tend to forget that. Sometimes when we read the Bible, it's like reading, say, Harry Potter or some other book.

It's a good story, isn't it? But we need to remind ourselves that the Bible is a historical document about a real place and a real time.

Well, this is where the centurion is. He is in Capernaum. In verse 2, we find out some more about this centurion. Let me read it for you. The centurion there, a centurion there, had a slave to whom he valued highly and was ill and close to death.

The next thing that we note that Luke the narrator tells us is that he has a slave. Now, this slave he has a relationship with. He's obviously good friends with this slave.

[6 : 43] He values him highly. Now, back in those times, a slave, if you had a good slave, he valued him highly because they did a lot of good work for you. But the way that it is described here is not just that he can do a lot of good things.

He valued him for the relationship as well. He obviously cared deeply about this person, this slave. And we see that this slave is just hanging on by a thread.

He's at death's door. We note that the centurion calls out for Jesus to come and heal him.

Verse 3. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him asking him to come and heal his slave. From this verse, we see a couple of things about this centurion.

Firstly, he understands that this Jesus has authority, that this Jesus is powerful, that this Jesus is the saviour.

[7 : 44] He's had no immediate contact. We gather that from there, that he obviously has only heard about Jesus. But he recognises his authority and power from God.

So convinced of this is that he sends some Jewish elders, elders of around where he is, to go and see Jesus and to call him to come and heal his slave. So off he goes and sends the Jewish elders. Well, from these Jewish elders, we actually learn more about this, this example that's been put before us. Let's read verses 4 and 5. When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly saying, He is worthy of having you do this for him, for he loves our people and it is he who built our synagogue for us.

The Jewish elders come to Jesus and they describe that this centurion is a worthy person. He's a person who loves God's people.

He's a person who has built the synagogue for them. He's a good guy. He's generous. According to the worldly standards, this guy deserves you coming and healing him.

[8 : 59] He's one of the good ones. You really should help him because he's been so good to us. But as we look back through the last couple of chapters, we've noticed that God's mercy is not for those who think that they are good, but it is for those who are poor and hungry and weak.

It's not on merit. And the last couple of chapters, we've seen that on the sermon that Jesus has been proclaiming. So there seems to be a bit of discrepancy here.

Here they are coming and saying to Jesus, He's a great guy. You need to do this. But as we've seen, that's not the way that God works. Because often our merits are not worthy.

Well, much to our surprise, and much to the surprise probably back then, Jesus goes to the Gentile. He goes to the centurion. He goes to visit him.

Now this is very surprising. For back in this time, it was not right for a Jew to go into the house of a Gentile. They were to be separate, to remain separate.

[10:15] Yet here Jesus is going to this person's house. This is quite surprising. But not far from the house, another group of friends come out to him.

They've been sent, as we see, by the centurion again. Let me read verses 6.

And Jesus went to them. But when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say 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 only speak the word and let my servant be healed. For I also 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 slave, do this, and the slave does it. The centurion, we get a bit more of a picture of this centurion, the one who's been set up as the example for us.

[11:20] Look at him in terms of his humility. Note the difference between the first lot that went and his friends. Notice it's his friends this time that have gone out to meet Jesus.

And they communicate almost directly the words that would have been coming from the centurion's mouth. It says there in verse 6, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

He is not worthy for him to come under his roof. He recognises Jesus, how important Jesus is, that he is God's representative, that he has God's power and authority.

He probably recognises also that he is a Gentile. And it's not right for the Jew to come under the Gentile's roof. How very different from the picture before.

Here he is saying he is not worthy. He recognises that he is unworthy for Jesus to come to him. So unworthy that he sent the people to him. That he wasn't worthy even enough to come and meet Jesus.

[12:32] See the humility in this man's life. But note also his understanding of Jesus' authority. Here is a centurion and he gives the example of his own life that for those that he has under his control he says go and do this and they go and do it.

He says to his slave come and they come. He is a man of authority. He recognises this authority. But he also recognises that Jesus has authority also.

Authority in the spiritual matters. Here we see the centurion using a minor to major comparison. He says if I a person who is in the Roman Empire who knows about authority if I say these things and it happens and I if I myself am under authority and do what I am told if I am like this how much more so Jesus how much more Jesus by him saying a single word is he able to heal.

Jesus is able to heal with the word. He recognised that. He recognised that he had control and that spiritual forces were subject to him.

They obeyed his word. What a great compliment to Jesus' authority. He says just speak a word. Just speak a word.

[14:05] you don't even have to come to my house. He recognises the authority. It doesn't even have to be there for him to exercise his authority. Note Jesus' response in verse 9 when Jesus heard this he was amazed at him and turning to the crowd that followed him he said I tell you not even in Israel have I found such faith.

Jesus is amazed at this man that this man has such faith. that this man understood so much about him.

This amazement that Jesus speaks about here that the Bible talks about is only mentioned one other place and it's in Mark chapter 6 where it talks about Jesus was amazed at Israel's unbelief. Here is Jesus being amazed at not Israel the one that was expecting the Messiah the one that expected Jesus to come he wasn't amazed at their faith but someone outside of Israel a Gentile centurion he was amazed at his faith he was surprised at it.

Well Jesus looks around as we see there in verse 9 he looks around to the crowd it's like the camera has been pulled back a little bit the focus has been on Jesus and this centurion and the people that have been coming to Jesus the camera moves out a little bit and we see that there is a large crowd of followers there with Jesus his disciples and he looks around to them and he says I haven't seen such faith in all of Israel what Jesus is actually saying in an indirect way is he's calling

them his disciples that are around him to trust him like the centurion the question in effect is will you trust as the centurion has trusted that's what he's saying to the crowd around him he's saying will you trust like the centurion in verse 10 we note the outcome of it when those who had been sent returned to the house they found the slave in good health

[16:37] Jesus was indeed a man of authority and power a man who was able to heal without even being there a man who went across barriers social religious barriers well Jesus holds the centurion up as an example that we should follow a Gentile not a Jew he was a person who recognised his unworthiness he was a person that recognised that he was not worthy for Jesus to come under his house for even him to come and meet Jesus he recognised he was unworthy yet note he is also a man who pleaded for help he went beyond acceptable and polite behaviour and he came up and tried to obtain help from Jesus note here also that he is set up as an example because he recognised

Jesus as a man who had authority a man who had power to heal even from a great distance he was a man who trusted in Jesus he was a man of faith this is what has been commended here in this story this is why the centurion is put up as an example for us to follow he's a man of faith if you note at the beginning of verse one of chapter seven it says after Jesus had finished saying all his sayings in hearing of the people he entered Capernaum note here the link between the sermon that we've been listening to over the last three or four weeks over the last three or four weeks we see Jesus beginning to set up a people for himself and giving them a teaching about what was acceptable behaviour for those who were part of his kingdom and right at the end there at chapter six he talks about good fruit and good trees bearing good fruit and noting there also about how people were to build on a rock a foundation that would be able to weather the storms and the people were people who put their trust in

Jesus not only did they listen to his words but they acted on them they listened to Jesus and acted on it these are the foundations that they were to build their lives on well what type of person was this what was this person who listened to Jesus and acted on his words what was this person like here we have the example of the centurion the centurion is the example of the one who heard Jesus and acted on it the one who put his foundation on the rock the one that would be able to weather the storm it was the centurion a man of faith as you read through the rest of the book of Luke we see that ultimate healing ultimate healing is found in the cross and found in Jesus death and resurrection for it's at Jesus death and resurrection we see that people are healed both physically and spiritually we see there at the cross that people's relationships are healed with God it's at the cross that our sins are paid for we see there at the cross and Jesus resurrection is the place which gives us hope for perfect bodies to come bodies that will be perfect in every way free from disease and sickness how would we enjoy this how would we enjoy this healing this ultimate healing that that Jesus brings well Luke gives us the clue here in Luke chapter 7 verses 1 to 11 it is by faith that we enjoy the great benefits that Jesus is able to offer is like the centurion a man of faith we are to be people who trust in

Jesus call out to Jesus for him to offer his aid in the form of his power even though we are unworthy to receive it so the question for us tonight is do you recognise your unworthiness of God's mercy when I was growing up I thought I was invincible I thought I could solve any problem you give me a problem and I could solve it didn't matter what it was I could do it during university it came to a great surprise to me that there was one thing that I couldn't solve there was one thing that I just couldn't do and that was fix my own relationship with God that I was not good enough that I was sinful and I couldn't do anything about it that I was a person unworthy to be in a relationship with God it was hard for me to recognise that during university that I was unworthy here I thought

I was a good person I did nothing wrong or so I thought I didn't murder I didn't really tell many lies I was pretty good I loved my sisters most of the time but during university I recognised that I was unworthy just as the centurion recognised he was unworthy for Jesus to come into his house do you recognise your great need of healing that there is brokenness in relationships brokenness in this world that we are indeed people who need healing we need healing in our relationship with God do you recognise Jesus the historical man the person who died on a cross and rose again do you recognise he has authority to heal your greatest needs do you recognise that Jesus has authority extends to us now even though he is not physically here just like the centurion recognised that Jesus could heal over space it did matter that

[24 : 04] Jesus wasn't there for the centurion for us it doesn't matter that Jesus is not physically here do you trust him Jesus at the beginning I talked about some of the examples of people that I admired people that I looked up to and tried to follow some of their examples and tried to embrace some of the things that I thought were good Luke here puts up a great example for us we are to be people of faith we are to be people who trust in Jesus let me pray Father we do indeed thank you that you have sent your son Jesus into this world Father we thank you that he is a man of authority that he is a man who has authority to bring healing

Father we thank you that because of him we can have a relationship with you and that one day we will be perfect in a perfect relationship with you Father help us to recognise our unworthiness of this Father help us to recognise our great need of you Father help us to be people that follow the centurion's example of faith we pray this in your son's name Amen for Thank you.