

Just Say The Word!

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[0 : 00] Go see Elisha. So he went to where Elisha was at, and Elisha doesn't even bother to see him. He just sends his servant to the door. You can imagine all the pomp and circumstance! of the highest ranking soldier in the Syrian army, all the money involved, because he's come with money. He doesn't expect to get this for free. He wants to pay whoever's going to heal him large sums of money. He's coming with, you know, imagine a chariot of some sort that's decked out, and I'm talking, you know, horses that are immaculate and wonderful and soldiers that are dressed and all of that pomp and circumstance, and they come and they knock on Elisha's door, and Elisha doesn't even come to the door.

He just sends a servant. Servant carries the messages back and forth between Elisha and Naaman, and the message is basically, yeah, I don't need to see you.

Just go to the Jordan River and dip in the river seven times, and you'll be healed. You'll be washed. You'll be cleaned. And Naaman is mad.

But finally his servant is like, hey, if you just do what he says and it works, then hey, what's the big deal here? Just do what he says. And he does, and he gets healed. Now there are some similarities between the Roman centurion, who also would have been a man of wealth, man of certainly power and authority, certainly Roman soldiers had killed Jews and all of that, and the Jews hated the Syrians.

[1 : 34] They now hate the Romans because they're in charge. So there's that similarity, but there are some differences. It's interesting that both are Gentiles, and yet the Lord heals them both as a lesson for the nation of Israel and ultimately for us as well.

Some of the differences, Naaman comes in arrogance and pride and authority and power and money, and he's coming for himself.

He needs to be healed. The centurion, the Roman centurion, is in charge of 100 soldiers, 100 Roman soldiers. So he's got authority and power and wealth and all of that too, but that's not how he comes.

He comes with great humility. As we read the story, you'll see that. He comes not exercising any of his power or trying to spend any of his money, and he's also coming on the behalf of someone else, a servant of his that he respects and honors and cares deeply about.

And so that brings us to the text, Luke chapter 7, verse 1. And after Jesus had finished all his sayings, now we just finished chapter 6, which is Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus has strung together these pearls of wisdom and application.

[3 : 02] And after he finished all of this in the hearing of the people, he entered the town of Capernaum, which is again in Galilee. It's a port city. It's the largest city in the region.

It's become kind of his home base during his earthly ministry. And he goes there, and before we get into the story, I want you to notice the connection between his story with the Roman centurion and what he has just taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

And so you have on your note sheet there four little checkpoints to, as we're making our way through the story, I want you to see, is Jesus being faithful to what he taught?

Is he practicing what he preached? We'll see that as we make our way through the text. And I don't know why the number 3 is there. It's supposed to be a checkmark. So here we are.

Jesus, so don't mind the 3. Let me go back here. Jesus loved his enemy. We're going to see that. The centurion would have been considered an enemy of the Jews.

[4 : 15] And certainly Jesus demonstrates love for him. Secondly, Jesus didn't judge because of position or title. This man had a high position, had high authority, had high position, and Jesus didn't judge him based on those things.

We talked about that last week. He did judge. He did exercise judgment by what was said and done. That's what mattered to him. And that's what should matter to us as well.

And then finally, Jesus showed mercy to the least deserving of the people there. And we're going to see that what you and I might consider the least deserving might be the servant.

But in the economy of God, it's the centurion who would be considered the least deserving. And Jesus shows him great grace and mercy in this.

So let's go ahead and take a look at this story beginning in chapter 7, verse 2. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death who was highly valued by him.

[5 : 25] Now the way that the English Standard Version translate this, you might think that, well, this servant must be valued to him because he's a good servant. And I don't want to have a good servant go to waste.

That's not what this verse is teaching. The word valued here is the idea of revered or respect. Honored. He cared deeply.

He held him in high esteem, this particular servant. Okay? That's what we ought to take from this, this centurion and his servant. And so he's very sick.

He's at the point of death. It's a medical term. Luke, the doctor, uses a medical term to let us know that, hey, this guy is at the point of death. There's nothing else that earthly doctors can do for this particular servant.

So when the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews asking him to come and heal his servant. Now this seems odd right off the bat because what's a Roman centurion doing sending elders of the Jews to Jesus?

[6 : 30] That doesn't make sense because the elders of the Jews would have hated the Roman centurion because they're the conquering army. And he's the head of, you know, a section of that army.

And so that seems odd right off the bat. Now the text will kind of clarify why they kind of hold this Roman centurion in high regard and why they would be willing to go and speak in his behalf.

When they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly saying, he is worthy to have you do this for him. Now, he wasn't worthy of having Jesus do this for him.

That's a misunderstanding and an estimation that is incorrect that the Jewish leaders would have had of this Roman centurion. But again, when you read what comes next, you understand why they might think he is worthy of Jesus' attention and ultimately his healing.

He is worthy to have you do this for him for he loves our nation. Whoa, step back for a moment here. What in the world is a Roman centurion doing loving the nation of Israel?

[7 : 43] Well, apparently he must be some sort of proselyte to the Jewish faith. Maybe even a student of the Old Testament scriptures would have come to understand and accept Jehovah God as the one creator and one God of the universe.

And that's why he would say he loves our nation. And certainly, we're called to do the same, to love the nation of Israel.

God blesses those who bless Israel, who love Israel. And he is the one who built us our synagogue. So, financially speaking, and that's how I would take this, he was the one who kind of put up either the most amount of money or maybe even all the amount of money it would take for them to build a synagogue in that town.

And so, yeah, they hold this guy in high regard because of these acts, these ways that he has followed through. One contradiction, he's a Roman soldier, he's a Roman centurion, they conquered our nation, what?

And yet, at the same time, perhaps he's also a lover of God and a helper and an aid to the people of Israel and of that town.

[9 : 05] Verse 7, oh, no, I skipped one here. When he was not far from the house, did I miss two there? And Jesus went with him. So Jesus went with the elders to go back to where the house, why am I skipping two at a time here?

What's going on here? 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.

Now, Matthew also tells this story and there would be some people who would say there's a contradiction in the stories because in Luke's account, Jesus never comes into contact with this Roman centurion.

pretty similar to the situation with Naaman in 2 Kings 5. Elisha never came into contact with Naaman. And here Luke tells us that the only conversation that's going on is between the representatives of the centurion, these Jewish elders, Jesus, and then the centurion and they're kind of in between.

When Matthew tells the story, he leaves out the detail of who the intermediaries are and just gives us the content of the conversation between the centurion and between Jesus.

[10:27] It's just a thing that is used by writers to quicken the story and that's all the explanation that you need for the difference between the two stories.

So the centurion sent friends to him saying, Lord, do not trouble yourself for I am not worthy. He understood that it would have been not just inappropriate for Jesus, a leading Jew and a rabbi to come into a Gentile's home.

He understood that. And so he's like, I'm not worthy of that because I'm not Jewish. Okay? And because I'm a sinner. He gets that.

I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore, I did not presume to come to you. It's why I didn't come and see you personally. But say the word.

And this is where it gets, the text says it this way that it's amazing. Just say the word and let my servant be healed. That's all you need to do, Jesus.

[11:30] Just, that's it. Just say the word. For I too am a man under, set under authority. He understands how authority works. With soldiers under me and I say to one, go and he goes and to another, come and he comes and I say to my servant, do this and he does it.

The Roman centurion says he gets how authority works. If I give an order, it happens. If I say go, the person goes. And he's saying to Jesus, Jesus, I understand that you also have great authority authority.

And you have authority even over nature and illness and disease and just say the word and I know that it will be done.

Say the word from wherever you're at. You don't even have to come to my house. You don't even have to be in the vicinity of my servant. I don't even have to meet you face to face, Jesus.

Just say the word. It's amazing the faith that this man expresses. And Jesus gets that. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him.

[12:48] That's incredible that Jesus was amazed by the faith of this centurion. And turning to the crowd that followed him said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.

Now, what's interesting is that Matthew gives us a couple extra details here that Luke leaves out. So I'm going to share that part of the story with you from Matthew's account. Matthew chapter 8 verse 11.

He said, not even in Israel have I found such faith. And then he says this, I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. So he uses this idea that this Roman centurion has this incredible faith and he's yet to see in all of his travels and all of his meetings and all of his discussions with all of these Jewish people not seeing that kind of faith demonstrated yet.

And then he talks about a future kingdom where there's going to be this table that is set and this meal that has been prepared a celebration and many will come from east and west east of Israel west of Israel not necessarily Israel itself while the sons of the kingdom the Israelites Jews will be thrown into the outer darkness in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth listen he's talking about heaven and hell he's talking about believers and unbelievers and he's saying listen in that day in my kingdom there will be many people who are not Jews who will be coming to faith in Jesus Christ and they will be at that table at that celebration and there will be many who are from the Jews who will be excluded left out because they did not have faith they did not believe it's an amazing statement that Jesus makes and he will make that going on going forward it's one of the problems that he had with the Jews because the statements like this they didn't like him wait a minute you're saying that we're going to be left out what are you talking about and when those who had been sent returned to the house they found the servant well and again one more detail from Matthew and to the centurion

[15:23] Jesus said go let it be done for you as you have believed and the servant was healed at that very moment in other words the the the the friends the servants of the centurion were told go it will be done for you they got to the centurion's house when they got there they discovered hey the servants already been healed and the centurion's like well what time did Jesus tell you that he

would be healed oh that's the same time that he was healed it's just Jesus has this mastery over elements and time and nature and all of this that's going on here and so there's some lessons that we can learn here from the centurion himself not just his faith but more than just his faith Jesus talked about and was amazed by his great faith but it was more than more than that and what we can learn from this

Roman centurion so first of all on your notes the Roman centurion had an exalted view of Jesus he held Jesus in this very high and exalted position he understood who Jesus is so he said to Jesus therefore I did not presume to come to you but say the word listen Jesus all you got to do speak and it's going to happen that's a pretty high view of Jesus right we get that and then secondly he talked about how he is a man under authority he understood the kind of authority the real authority while every time Jesus performed a miracle people were questioning him people were doubting him people were surprised that he could do it and this guy is going yeah I get it you're a man under authority like I am and it's almost like he's treating the power and the authority and the ability of Jesus to heal this man almost casually like well of course he can do it what are you talking about he just assumed he just understood the stories that he's heard about Jesus he gets it this is the Messiah that the Old Testament had been talking about and my Jewish friends I don't know what their problem is but I get it he's come from God all he has to do is speak and boom it happens I get that and so he has this exalted view of Jesus that Jesus is indeed the sovereign Lord of all authority all authority and he comes under that authority he gets that he gets that there is much to learn about this centurion we don't even get to know his name secondly the Roman centurion had a lowly view of himself he gets that he understood his position for

I am not worthy to have you come under my roof the centurion understood his position from a theological perspective he understood that he wasn't worthy he was not sufficient in that way I am unworthy I am insufficient Jesus is not going to do this incredible act of mercy on my behalf on behalf of my servant he's not going to do this for me because I've somehow earned it because I've somehow been qualified he's not going to do it because I recognize anything or whatever it's simply an act of mercy I'm asking for grace and mercy from almighty God and I can't

I'm not worthy to even have a conversation with this man the third thing from this Roman centurion that we learned that he had a caring view of others and we kind of talked about this the centurion who had a servant who was sick was highly valued or highly regarded highly esteemed respected by him and then the estimation of the elders the Jewish elders for he loves our nation he's the one who built our synagogue this is a caring man which again is when you think of a Roman centurion you think of an older battle hardened you know I don't care about the people I've conquered and that doesn't describe this centurion at all he cares about the people he's in charge of he cares about the community that he is given to run and he pays for their synagogue and he cares about his servant this is a caring man and so we get that from this story and those who are helpless he understands this those who are helpless have need of our compassion and he gets this now we also learn some things about

[21 : 04] Jesus in this passage there are some things when we talk about faith faith again is this intangible thing that's hard for us to wrap our arms around and really get a hold of but we're going to learn some of these things from Jesus and also later on we're going to talk about faith in a little more practical terms so that we can understand this the song that that Tom and the band just did we're going to a place in heaven where there will be no more need for faith because our faith will have become sight we'll see Jesus face to face so we won't need faith anymore only love would remain our hope will have been fulfilled when we see his face and we see some things from this text and others that teach us about Jesus the first thing here is that

Jesus can be amazed at our faith or at our lack of faith we see that Jesus was amazed at this man the centurion face he marveled at him Jesus marveled at him or was amazed by him because not even in Israel have I seen such faith and so he was amazed he was blown away by this pagan supposedly Roman Gentile enemy of the nation of Israel and yet he's expressing this incredible faith that he has not yet seen in Israel and yet the opposite what he finds in Israel is also true man my powerpoint is really jumping ahead of me Jesus marveled because of their unbelief Mark chapter 6 verse 6 so he can be amazed at our faith or he can be amazed at our lack of faith!

I wonder when someone hears the simple truth of the gospel and they say I don't believe that I wonder if the Lord is amazed by that that would not be in a good way the second thing is that the power to heal or the power to do these miraculous things is from God himself it's not about having

the right process or the right formula okay sometimes you can read a book about miracles or faith or healing and kind of the idea that's taught is if you'll just do these steps in this order then you'll perhaps have a better chance of being healed or receive what it is that you're asking from God and it has nothing to do with that and we see that throughout the gospels that

Jesus heals! people that express great faith like what we see today and then there are times where Jesus heals people who have no faith and no idea they're not even asking for it and Jesus comes along and heals them they don't even know it's coming let alone to have the faith to believe that it would happen and so all kinds of things there are times where he's right in front of them and he's laying hands on them or he's touching them in some way or he's spitting in the mud and he's rubbing it in their eyes and there's all kind and like with this one he's not even in!

the same vicinity! there's all different ways that Jesus and it's not about any of that it's about the object of our faith it's about who our faith is in God is the one who does this it's not the expression of our faith Jesus said it would take the faith the size of a what's the word mustard seed it's the tiniest little seed!

[25 : 29] little tiny bit of faith it's not about the amount of faith if someone is saying to you and and and this is a popular phrase you hear in some Christian circles that the reason you haven't been healed according to the preacher is that you haven't expressed enough faith you don't have enough faith and that's not found in the scriptures how how horrible to have someone express well you don't have enough faith so you're not worthy to be healed whoa whoa to the person who would say that the third is that the lack of God's presence never diminishes his power as we see here

God doesn't have to be present but here's the deal we have a promise where that's not even a possibility we're never not in the presence of God right he's made this promise I will never leave you for or for sake did I skip it again my little new flicky here is not treating me well today I am with you always to the end of the age the promise Jesus said and we have the Holy Spirit who takes up residence within us so the presence of God is always here we don't have to ask Lord will you come meet with us today why why why or I remember when I was a freshman in college I went to a Christian college and I had a professor and the first thing he shared with us in class was my first impression in class at school was if you have anyone who's saying

Lord be with us stop asking for that he's already with you you don't have to ask him for it I'm like okay you know come down hard on me next time but it's true we don't have to ask for him to be with us he already is now in your prayers recognize that thank you for being here thank you for your presence within thank you that you guiding me and directing!

that again is an expression of our faith to understand I don't have to ask him he's already here okay so we don't have to worry about that whether he's in our presence or not and then fourth we give God our attention because he first got ours this whole coming to faith in Christ was not our idea it was his first John 4 10 and this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins propitiation rabbit trail it's a great word it's a big word big theological word you should you should it's replacement he payment for our sin that's that's what it means but he loved us first now the last thing that

I want to do today is you see this on your notes to string together some pearls of faith and that's not original we talked about this Jesus' preaching style in the sermon the old the Jewish way of saying that kind of preaching style is stringing together pearls and that's what this next section is short little hits if you will about faith that we need to understand the first little hit is that our faith honors and pleases God of course because when we're expressing faith in him to move to reply to answer that honors him that's saying Lord I know you can like the centurion I know you can this is not a big deal for you for God right it might be a big deal for me but God this is nothing for you it's easy right you can handle this you can do and that honors him you might be thinking oh well it's kind of cavalier for you to act that way towards your faith in him but no it's it's it's better than like begging and pleading because now you're putting it more in your court and well

[30 : 38] I'm not begging enough and I'm not expressing enough faith and I'm not doing all the things that I need no it's just it's either Lord you're going to do! that expression of faith honors him and pleases him here's another one and we've mentioned some of these before the faith focuses on God as its proper object and to me that's kind of a I'm not trying to say that God is an object but neither is faith sometimes people would say something along the lines of well you just need to have faith okay you may have heard that you may have said something like that but it's an incomplete sentence faith in what because it's the in what that matters more than the faith what is your faith in

or more correctly stated who is your faith in whether you have faith or not is ultimately not the big deal the big deal is who is your faith in okay so that that's what we need to focus on faith in

Christ in the Lord the object of our faith third faith anticipates and asks for great things from a great God that's why the centurion asked the way that he did he believed that God was great he believed that Jesus is God and that he is great and he can just speak and it's going to happen that's great and so we can ask for we can dare to and I don't know if dare is the right word we can simply anticipate that God's going to move and ask for big things for great things absolutely and again that's going to honor God here here's another one that we see in this passage today that faith is always found in the vicinity of grace and mercy and the centurion understood this his petition his request of

Jesus is asking for mercy I don't deserve this what I deserve is the wrath of a righteous and holy God I don't deserve for you to step in and heal my servant I don't deserve that I am not worthy of that I am insufficient and so Lord I'm asking for your mercy and Jesus by healing his servant extends that mercy that grace to him and so faith is always going to be found around nearby in the vicinity of grace and mercy interesting that Naaman captain of the Syrian army 2nd Kings chapter 5 is full of arrogance pride his own wealth

God still heals him I don't I don't get that I you know right you struggle with that why did he heal him he's doing everything the opposite of the centurion the centurion it seems to me is coming in the right frame of mind he's coming in humbly with humility and Naaman is the opposite and that's mercy both are just as undeserving and you and I we also undeserving unworthy insufficient faith does not require proximity or nearness to be near does not require sight or visible evidence and and that makes it more more difficult for for you and

I people in our day and age because Jesus is not on the planet like he was during his earthly ministry we don't see him right in front of us in a crowd of people healing people we see him actively we know what he does in our lives and in the lives of others we can see that but to many people it is unseen unrecognized because they lack faith they lack belief but the evidence is there it may not be visible he is always with us so we don't have to worry about proximity and our faith will become sight when we see him face to face but these are not necessary for God to be active in our life physically there it did again the faith with which

[36 : 18] Jesus commended seeks the blessing of God on others rather than on self Jesus commended the faith of this centurion was blown away by it amazed by it even taught spiritual truth about heaven and hell based on the faith of this Roman centurion Naaman didn't express any of this faith and he was just trying he was just out for himself the fact that God still healed him there's something else that God is trying to teach through Naaman than what he is teaching us through this Roman centurion but the centurion teaches us that faith expressed on the behalf of someone else rather than self God honors that

God honors and it's not that you shouldn't ask for yourself and it's not that you shouldn't have faith that God will do something in your own life but there's a higher measure of what honors God when I express that faith on the behalf of someone else okay and then finally this last one this is the shortest of them all faith grows now again you only need faith the size of a mustard seed for God to move right and it's not about the size of the faith it's about what our faith or who our faith is in okay we get that but even that tiny mustard seed properly nurtured grows into a mustard tree what does that say about our faith that it may start out very small but as we live for the

Lord as we immerse ourselves in the word of God as we learn to trust him in every aspect of our life guess what happens to our faith it grows like a mustard seed and we need our faith to grow into maturity so while you may only need faith the size of a mustard seed don't let it sit there plant it water it nurture it help it to grow and it will honor God and you will be closer to your Lord and Savior let's go to the Lord in prayer Lord you have given us so much and faith we understand it it comes from you it's not something that we generate in ourselves of ourselves

Lord we can take the faith that you have given us and nurture it and help it to grow and I pray that we would do that that we would grow into maturity and to express the kind of faith that this centurion we don't know much about him we don't know his name we don't know anything about his family and yet what a picture we have of what our faith should be and how that faith honors you and pleases you and yes even amazes you Lord may that be true in our midst among our people that we would be a people of faith a faith that starts out small and what matters is who our faith is in but

Lord as we live this life we seek to live for you and honor you that our faith would grow that we would have the kind of faith that would be a testimony to the people around us to our families to our fellow church members and community Lord we are blessed to be a part of your family to know Jesus as Lord and Savior and Lord I know that there are many in this room who have made that decision and they've trusted in you as Lord and Savior and we're going to be in heaven together and Lord I also know that there will be some who have not yet made that decision who have either put it off or pretended to be something that they're not but have not truly surrendered their life entrusting you with it so

[42 : 19] Lord I pray that the kind of faith that trusts you with our lives that people would express that kind of faith that kind of trust and to say Lord I know there is no other way I can't be good enough I can't earn it the only hope I have is in what Jesus Christ has already done for me the cross where he paid the debt for my sin took what I deserved as the punishment for my sin upon himself and he rose again from the dead Lord and we believe so Lord I pray that for those who have not yet trusted you as savior that even today would be a day where they can take what they have learned and apply it and take that step of faith and say yes

Lord I trust you with my life for those of us who have been living for you for some time I pray that our faith would continue to grow with all the fits and starts and stops and with all the struggles that we have in this life and yet through it all we would be able to look back and see the kind of maturity that you have brought us into through the years help us to grow in our faith we love you and we praise you and we ask it all in Jesus name amen