

**Confirmation Sunday – June 2, 2013**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**Luke 7:1-10**

... Jesus ... entered Capernaum. 2) There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3) The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4) When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5) because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6) So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7) That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8) For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9) When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." 10) Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

**Dear friends:**

Later in our service this morning Jasmine, Julia, Alan and Matthew will promise to be faithful to the Lord as he gives them strength. But what does it mean to be faithful to the Lord? That's a question which our text for today can help us answer. Jesus praised the faith of the Centurion in our text saying: **I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.** So what some of the marks faithfulness to the Lord that caused Jesus to say this?

**Theme:** A Praiseworthy Faith

1. ... is unselfish
2. ... humbly looks to Jesus for his help
3. ... takes the Lord at his word

Our text took place in Capernaum, a city located on an important trade route between Jerusalem and Damascus on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. A garrison of Roman soldiers was stationed here. It would appear that the centurion (a commander of 100 men) was in charge of these troops. It would also appear that the centurion was a foreigner who was a convert to the Jewish religion. The Lord had brought him to faith in the promise of a Savior. We are told in our text that the Centurion had heard of Jesus.

Jesus' teaching and miracles were common knowledge in the region around Capernaum so it is not surprising that the Centurion would have heard about Jesus. But let's also keep in mind that this man was a convert to Judaism. He was familiar with the Old Testament prophecies of the promised Savior and Messiah. The Holy Spirit had used what the Centurion had heard to create faith in his heart.

His unselfish prayer to the Lord Jesus for his servant was a fruit of this faith. The Lord's loving concern for others motivates an unselfish concern for others. The centurion's life was filled with evidence of such unselfishness. The most obvious was his concern for his dying servant. **There a centurion's servant, whom 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.**

The centurion had come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah promised by God in the OT since only someone with divine powers could perform the miracle of healing that the centurion was seeking for his servant. He humbly looked to Jesus for help. In his humility the centurion did not go to Jesus himself. He sent

some elders of the Jews to intercede for him. **When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5) because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."** The elders gave additional evidence of the unselfish nature of the centurion when they told Jesus about his love for their nation and his generosity in building them a place of worship where they could gather to study the Scriptures and for prayer. All of this is further evidence of his love for the Word and the faith which the Spirit had created in his heart.

The Devil has succeeded in spreading the lie that you've got to look out for yourself. That selfish idea also appeals to our human weakness. All of us are affected by it to one degree or another. Young people often get the feeling the world revolves around them and they should be the center of attention. One of the more difficult challenges in a marriage relationship is for husbands and fathers to set aside their own interests and desires so that they can provide for the needs and interests of their spouse and children. It's not just men who have to battle their selfishness. Moms & kids have the same problem. No matter what our age we are often oblivious to the needs of others. That's why it is often difficult for us to pray for others. The more we understand how unselfish our Savior was the easier it becomes for us to consider the needs of others and the interests of others and the easier it will be for us to pray in an unselfish manner. The centurion was unselfish in his daily dealings with others. That unselfishness earned him the praise of others. It also made it possible for him to seek out the Lord Jesus on behalf of his servant.

We can show our love for others as we show our concern for them by offering prayers for them. Young people can pray for their parents and friends. Adults can pray for our spouses, for our children, for those we work with and for those who serve us in our government.

We can also show our concern for the Lord's kingdom as we offer prayers for our pastor, for those who teach our children, for missionaries who spread the gospel in places we can't personally go, and for those who at this time do not yet know that Jesus is their Savior.

These are examples of unselfish prayers. When we have personal concerns and personal needs – surely the Lord would encourage us to call out to him – but if all of our prayers are self-centered we can learn a lesson from the Centurion to pray for others and to be less selfish with our prayers.

Our Lord Jesus was eager to help. He went out of his way to go back with the Jews. **He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7) That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.**

Humility before the Lord comes as a result of the awareness of our sins. The centurion was aware of the fact that he was a mere man. How could he even think of showing proper hospitality to Jesus – the Son of God? When we have a humble opinion of ourselves this will show in the way we come before our God with our requests. There will be no need for us to build up a defense to explain the reasons for our requests. There will be no need to brag about who we are or what we have done. On the contrary – we will come seeking mercy. We will plead earnestly as we express our humility and unworthiness. Yet we will come confidently because the answers to our prayers don't depend on our own merits or worthiness. Our confidence stems from the faithfulness of the Lord which has inspired us to come to him in prayer. The centurion made no demands. He didn't lay down any conditions or restrictions. He looked only to God's grace and mercy. He had a faith which was willing to accept the fact that God has absolute power and control over all things including sickness and death.

We can also learn to humbly look to Jesus for his help. Once again Satan has been quite successful in convincing people to set aside the virtue of humility and to replace it with a pride and an arrogance that says: "I'm the best and because I'm the best, I'll get whatever I want."

But one look at God's law tells us that we're not the best. The prophet Isaiah put the proper perspective on our acts. He wrote: (Isaiah 64:6) **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags...** That humbles us in a hurry, doesn't it? Yet in spite of this fact the Lord Jesus has invited us to come to him with our sins, with our weaknesses, our burdens, our problems and concerns – and remember these concerns don't have to be personal – they can be our unselfish concerns for the welfare of others.

In humility we confess our sins and our unworthiness in our prayers confident that the Lord will forgive us and that he will not deny our requests on account of them -- because that is a promise the faithful Lord has made to us. Therefore we will humbly look to Jesus for his help confident that he is the almighty Son of God, our Savior. We can pray to him with the confidence that nothing is impossible for him.

Dear confirmands, think of what this means for you as you promise to be faithful to the Lord. Because of our sinful nature there is no way that we could be faithful to the Lord. Yet in his faithfulness to us he sent Jesus to be faithful for us. In his grace the Holy Spirit called you to faith through baptism and strengthened your faith through your study of his Word. Today he is enabling you to promise to be faithful to him. And today he wanted to assure you that no matter situation will confront you in life that he will remain faithful to you. He invites you to hang on to his promises and to call upon him in the day of trouble and temptation with the confidence that he can and will help. That's something you can depend on because it's something our Lord has promised in his Word.

The Centurion was willing to take the Lord at his Word because he understood the power of the Word when it is spoken by someone with authority. He explained through his messengers why it wouldn't be necessary for Jesus to come to his home. **"I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."**

The centurion used himself as an example of authority. He himself was a part of middle management. He had to report to his superiors and follow their commands. But he also had soldiers who served under his command. When he would issue orders to his soldiers, the orders would be obeyed. Jesus was under no authority. He had divine power at his disposal. Surely his word would accomplish this miracle of healing. He trusted in the almighty power of Jesus, the Lord with divine authority to simply give the command for the illness to depart. His confidence was not misplaced. Our text tells us that **when Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." 10) Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.**

The Lord Jesus made this promise to those who believe in him: **You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.** (John 14:14) It's sometimes difficult to explain what it means to ask in Jesus' name. The centurion provides an excellent example of praying in Jesus' name. Prayer in Jesus' name is prayer that seeks his will and is submissive to His authority. The unselfish, humble, trusting prayer of the centurion expressed his willingness to accept the Lord's will in regard to the health of his servant.

When we hear how the Lord graciously answered the prayer of the centurion we are encouraged by the Lord's faithfulness to bring our prayers to the Lord, confidently trusting in his word.

God speaks to us in his word to tell us of his love and his will for us. Guided by that word we will know who to pray for and in many cases what to ask for. Always we can pray with the confidence that our heavenly Father will give good things to those who ask in keeping with Jesus promise: (Matthew 7:11) **If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!**

The privilege of prayer is one of the many blessings we enjoy through faith in Christ Jesus. But sadly it's a privilege we often neglect to our own harm. One of the reasons that we may fail to be fervent in prayer is because we fail to listen to God. Prayer is a heart-to-heart talk with God. If we're not listening to God we won't have the motivation to pray. Our faithful Lord inspires our prayers. We learn of his faithfulness as he speaks to us in his Word. As we use his word we will be encouraged to pray to him with unselfish requests as we humbly look to Jesus for his help and as we take the Lord at his word.

May the Lord bless our confirmands and each of us through his Word with an unselfish faith, with a humble faith and with a faith that takes him at his word. Amen.