

LUKE 7:1-10

HUMBLY SEEKING HELP FROM JESUS

Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

Is it easy to ask for help? --- When a project, be it a carpenter or mechanic project, gets bigger than you thought, is it easy to ask for help? When you need more than two hands mastering things in the kitchen, is it easy to ask for help, especially if you feel someone else will think you are lacking? When your vehicle is down, or you are sick, or you just don't drive anymore, is it easy to ask for a ride? When the billfold and checkbook are empty, is it easy to ask someone for money to buy groceries?

Let's go a step further. When asking for help, how do you feel about asking with humility—"Will you do this for me please?" Or is it easier to "ask" with an air of demanding—"You need to do this for me" Or to get a favor done on the basis of a deal, "I helped you, now you help me. If you do this for me, I'll do that for you"? It's not easy to ask, it's not easy to ask with humility. When I was growing up, sometimes when I asked my father for something, he was quick to point out to me if my words were genuine "asking" or if they were more or less words of "demanding." "Are you asking me, or are you telling me?" he would say. It's never easy, just to ask.

That same trait carries right over into our requests before God. Have you ever thought to yourself, "He knows what I need. I'm not going to ask." Pride, pride, pride. Sinful pride and ego makes "asking" hard. Our preferred choice is "I don't need to ask—even God. I can take care of it myself." Sinful pride. In Proverbs we read, "*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*" (16:18).

In our text for today, we see a man who needed help from Jesus. When it comes to asking help from Jesus, there is no room for pride and no reason for pride. He, who died for our sins and rose again, forgives all our offenses. By Spirit-worked faith in the message of His Word, we Guilty are pronounced Not Guilty as a gift. Trust Him for forgiveness and more. He looks for our requests when we are in need. He wants us to come to Him in every trouble. He always answers in love and power and wisdom. Then we praise Him and serve Him with hearts of devotion. *Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me* (Psalm 50:15).

In our text the Centurion was a Roman commander of 100 men—"century" in Latin means one hundred. As a centurion needed to be, he must have been resourceful in solving difficult situations, and he was accustomed to giving orders and getting immediate responses—that's how things work best in a smooth running military. He was stationed at Capernaum, apparently for some time—at least long enough to befriend many Jews and to build a synagogue, a worship place, for them. The Centurion, surely a Gentile (non-Jew), had also come to know and trust the God, of the Old Testament, the LORD of the Jewish race, the God of the Promise of the Savior. --- Jesus had also spent much time in Capernaum. In Capernaum He had gathered His first disciples—Peter and brother Andrew, James and brother John, all commercial fishermen—He had driven out demons from those possessed, He had healed Peter's mother-in-law and all who came with various diseases, He had preached and taught in the synagogue(s)—perhaps in the very synagogue the Centurion had built. --- Now the godly Centurion was up against something bigger than he was. Death—the great equalizer, it strikes all—the great constant, it's always approaching. Death. The centurion's treasured servant was sick (Matthew tells us he was paralyzed) and was dying. The centurion was in great need. He heard Jesus was in Capernaum appealed to Jesus for help.

The Centurion certainly could have dressed in his finest military regalia, been accompanied by impressive Roman soldiers, sought out Jesus, and from a position of prestige and intimidation implied, "You need to help me."

But he did not. In all humility, he would not even show up in Jesus' presence—he was a Gentile Roman soldier but Jesus the promised heir to King David's throne over all God's people, a spiritual throne, and Savior of the world. The centurion sent elders of the Jews to beseech Jesus for help. Not only had the centurion cared for the Jewish nation and people, but these elders in Capernaum cared for him too. So they went. Was the Centurion too proud to come to Jesus and plead for Jesus' help. It was not pride at all. When Jesus was on His way to the Centurion's house, the Centurion sent another group of friends to interrupt Him. The message from the Centurion was "*Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You.*" He had not thought himself worthy to come to Jesus. It was not pride but humility. Who was I to stand before You? He didn't even count himself fit to have Jesus, the *Lord*, the promised Savior, enter into his house. His words to address Jesus as Lord were not just simply the Greek way of saying "Sir." He meant Lord as in God. He brought His request in all humility. It's similar to the tax collector in Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (not "*republican*," but "*publican*," a "public servant" of the Roman government), a tax collector. The Pharisee looked up to heaven, God I thank you that I am not as other men are. But the tax collector would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

When you approach God in prayer, do you humbly "ask" Him? Or do you independently "tell" Him, this is what I need! Approach the Lord in humility. You are but the lump of clay. The Lord is the Potter (to refer to last week's lesson). Are you worthy to have the Lord Jesus enter into your house--sinner that you are, and holy Lord that He is? No. BUT Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He came to seek out, not those who think they are spiritually healthy, but those who are spiritually sick. He came to this earth, took mortal flesh and blood, was laid in a manger/born in a stable, for sinners like you. Jesus wants to be in your house. He is there to love you with His forgiveness, lead you with His kindness, steer you with His wisdom, and hold you with His strength.

Nor was the Centurion's conviction that Jesus should not enter his house a conviction of hopelessness, "I don't belong. I never will. I'll always be on the outside looking in, as far as the Kingdom goes." Rather, his conviction that Jesus not enter his house was a conviction of utter and complete trust and confidence in the Lord, His love, and His power. *Say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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.*" The Centurion was a man in a system of a chain-of-command. He had authority. If he told a soldier, or a servant, to do something, he knew it would be done. He understood that Jesus also had authority, being Lord and God and Promised Savior. If Jesus simply said something, it would be so. Remember creation? The Lord God said, Let there be, and it was so. Jesus could heal the Centurion's servant whether He was standing next to Him, whether He was five blocks away, whether He simply thought it, or whether He was at the Father's side in heaven. Such great confidence the Centurion had!

When you go to your Savior in prayer, such confidence is also yours. Know for a fact, Jesus hears and answers, *Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you!* Although He knows what you need before you ask Him, He wants you to exercise your faith and your trust; and ask Him—humbly and confidently. He will help. His help may not be the way you think it should be, but it is always there, and the best help. Sometimes He answers, Yes. Sometimes He answers, No. Sometimes He answers, Not now. Sometimes He answers, In a different way. Example: The night before Peter was to be executed by King Herod in Jerusalem, the believers were praying at the house of another Mary, the mother of John Mark, In their prayers they perhaps were praying, Please, Lord, have Herod change his mind about executing Peter. Please, Lord, have Herod at least postpone the day. Please Lord cause a disturbance in the city, so that Herod is distracted from the execution. But God's answer was, In another way. That night an angel came down and quietly freed Peter from prison, Peter went to the house of this Mary, knocked at the locked door, and told Rhoda the servant girl who he was. She was so excited, she did not unlock the door but ran to tell the others that Peter was there. It was too far-fetched! They refused to believe her, until they heard the continued knocking and let Peter in! (Acts 12). The Lord had answered in a different way. He will always answer in the best way and time. Pray to the Lord in all humility. He has redeemed you and saved you by grace, His gift. You are His dear child by faith in Christ. Pray to Him in all confidence. He will never ignore or disregard you. "*Whatever you ask the Father in My Name, He will give you,*" Jesus said (John 16:23). In other words, when you ask, trusting in Jesus, you will receive the best answer.

That's what happened for the Centurion. Jesus complimented the Centurion for his great faith. The friends found the servant healed at the house. Jesus is Lord. A true man, He is also true God with all power and love. You cannot see Him on Transfiguration Sunday, as Peter and John did, shining in all glory on the mountain. However, you just as surely see Him with eyes of faith, trusting the Bible's message of His glory there with the Centurion, His glory in the Transfiguration, His glory at the empty tomb, and His glory at the end of time. Go to Him humbly and with all confidence!

So be it! Amen.

Pastor Kanzenbach---