

Easter 4

Luke 7:1-7 – Place Your Trust in Jesus

April 24-26, 2010 by: Seminarian Brian Semrow

*Luke 7:1-7 -- <sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup> There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.*

In the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, dear fellow believers,

With heavy eyelids and weary bones, a young mother and father tried to get their little bundle of joy to stop crying. As the hours got later and later, the parents become more and more concerned for the welfare of their little child. A diaper change didn't work. A fresh bottle didn't work. The mother held her baby close to her as her husband hummed a lullaby, and this didn't work either. The baby continued to scream. Eventually, the mother even called her own mother for advice. Nothing seemed to be working, and now the child had a fever. After running out of ideas, they decided to take their little baby to their family doctor, a man whom they placed their trust in, because he cared for the welfare of their child. He had dedicated his life to studying medicine, in order to help others, and he also had the "power" to help this little baby. He had the correct medicine to heal the child from its sickness. In our lesson for today, we take a look into another story of sickness and trust. We see a Centurion place his trust in Jesus, the ultimate physician, because Jesus has divine concern for his creation, and because he has divine power to heal.

After Jesus had finished preaching his masterful Sermon on the Mount, he went to the city of Capernaum on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee. Now a Roman centurion lived in the city, and he had a servant that was very sick and was about to die. This wasn't just any old servant, but a servant whom the centurion cared about dearly. The Greek word used here is the same word used for a child. The centurion cared about this servant as if it was one of his own children, and he wanted to help his servant.

The centurion had heard of the great miracles Jesus had done. He knew that Jesus deeply cared for other people, and that he was willing to help others, so he sent a group of Jewish elders to speak to Jesus on his behalf. The centurion trusted that Jesus cared about his problem, and that Jesus could help him.

So as Jesus entered the city, this group of elders approached Jesus, and they asked him to come and heal the centurion's servant. They said to Jesus, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." These Jews thought that the centurion deserved Jesus' help. See, the Centurion was a Roman citizen. He had no obligation to have any concern for the Jewish people, laws, or customs. He was a man in charge of 100 soldiers, a man who had been sent to Judea to keep peace and order, to prevent the Jews from revolting against Roman authority. But this centurion was different than most. We hear from these Jewish elders that this centurion loved the Jewish nation. He even built a synagogue for them to worship in. This centurion understood the importance of the Jewish religion. He understood that the God of the Jews was the only God to be worshiped, and so he used his own money to build a synagogue. What a great man this centurion was! The Jews obviously understood his greatness and importance, and they thought that Jesus should recognize it too. Of all the people that Jesus should have cared about, this man should have been at the top of his list.

And so, Jesus, because he did have concern for this centurion, followed these elders to the house of the centurion to heal his servant, but before they got to the house, the centurion sent another group of people to Jesus. A group of the centurion's friends came to Jesus and once again spoke on behalf of the centurion, "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you." The Jews thought that the centurion deserved Jesus care and attention, but in these words, we are able to take a look into the heart of the centurion himself. The centurion was bold in his trust that Jesus cared for him and his servant, and because of his boldness, he asked Jesus to help him. But the centurion was also humble. He knew that Jesus was far greater than he could ever be. He knew that Jesus love and concern had no bounds-something that no matter how hard he tried, he could never live up to. The centurion said that he was unworthy to have Jesus enter his house. He felt that he wasn't even

worthy to speak to Jesus in person. It was this bold yet humble trust that led the centurion to ask Jesus for help in his time of need.

As we look into this small snippet of the centurion's life, we can't help but think about our own lives too. Sickness and pain affect all of us in one way or another. We catch pneumonia that keeps us from the office for days, maybe even causing us to end up in the hospital. We feel sorrow as we watch our children sniffle and cough after being outside without a jacket on. We grieve as our parents undergo chemotherapy for lung cancer. Why does a God who cares about his creation allow sickness to affect us? Why do our most kind and caring friends and neighbors, people who seem deserve only the best, undergo such pain and sorrow? God is not the one to blame because of sickness and pain. No, the sickness and pain that we face is a result of the sin that has filled the world.

God created the world perfectly, without blemish or defect, with out pain and sickness, but when Eve ate of that fruit in the Garden of Eden, the fruit that God had forbidden her to eat, and when she gave it to Adam and he ate from it, sin entered the world. When sin entered the world, the consequences of sin came along with it. God told Eve that from now on, she would experience pain in childbirth, and that Adam would suffer from the weeds that grow among the plants. Thousands of years have passed since Adam and Eve lived, but the world is still covered in sin. Those words from the Psalm of David still ring true today, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." We are sinful people and we feel the effects of sin in our lives. Our sinful natures lead us to think that God owes us something, that he owes us his love and care, just like those Jewish elders thought that the centurion deserved Jesus love and care. As sinners, we deserve the complete opposite. As enemies of God, we deserve not only suffering in this life, which leads to death, but also the eternal suffering in the fiery pit of hell.

Thank God that he has divine care for the crown of his creation. God tells us in his word to "Cast all of our anxieties on him, because he cares for us." Through Jesus, God's care is on display for all people to see. All of those miracles, all of those healings—Jesus did because he cared for those people, but he was not only concerned about their physical wellbeing. Jesus cares also about the condition of our souls. "God our Savior wants all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth." He knew that we were doomed to eternal suffering because of our spiritual sickness. Because of his divine care, he sent his one and only son to save us from that sickness. God didn't send Jesus as our remedy from sin because we deserved his love and care. God doesn't owe us anything. Our sin makes us unworthy, and we see this unworthiness in the words of the centurion. It is only because of God's undeserved love that he sent his Son to save us, and through his Word, he gives us faith like that of the centurion to trust in his promises, promises that he cares for our physical and spiritual wellbeing.

But what would God's divine concern for the prize of his creation mean, if he didn't have the power to help us? Jesus not only cares, but he has the power to deliver us from our weakness both physically and spiritually.

The centurion knew that Jesus cared for him and his sick servant. He sent for Jesus asking for his help in humility, trusting that Jesus wanted to help him, but the centurion also trusted that Jesus had the divine power to heal his servant. He said to Jesus, "Say the word and my servant will be healed." What amazing faith the centurion had. He was confident that Jesus' word had power, and that a simple word from the mouth of Jesus would be enough to heal his precious servant. As a leader in the Roman army, the centurion understood what power was. The centurion said, "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." The centurion had power and authority in his own right to make the people under him do as he commanded, but his power was nothing like the power of Jesus. The centurion was powerless to heal his servant, but he knew that Jesus' power was far greater than his. He knew that Jesus had power and authority over sickness, and that he could command that sickness to leave his servant.

Jesus was amazed at the great faith that the centurion had. Through faith, the centurion trusted in Jesus heavenly concern and power. Prior to this, Jesus had been preaching, and performing miracles throughout Israel—showing the people that he was true God, and yet Jesus said to the crowd, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." The Jews knew the teachings of the Old Testament. They had all of the promises of God that a Savior would come to save them from their sins. They had the sacrifices and temple rituals to remind them of their sin and of their Savior from sin, but many of them failed to place their faith in Jesus as that Savior. But this Gentile, this foreigner in the land of Israel, he had a great faith. He placed his full trust in Jesus, trust in his divine care and power. And after Jesus commended this man's faith, the friends of the centurion and the elders returned to the house of the centurion and found the servant well. Jesus cared for the centurion, and he healed the centurion's servant through his heavenly power.

We know that Jesus also cares for our physical and spiritual wellbeing, as we see by his willingness to help the centurion's servant, but he also has the power to make us well in body and soul. This same power that the centurion trusted, is the power in which we also place our trust. God's very word is power. Even the wind and the waves bow to his command. A simple word, which flowed from the lips of Jesus, was able to heal the centurion's servant. Jesus doesn't walk among us physically today, healing the sick, but he hears our prayers, and as we listen to his word, the Holy Spirit puts faith in our hearts to trust in his promises. When sickness and suffering enter our lives, God blesses us with amazing

doctors and medicine to cure us from that sickness. He gives us strong immune systems to fight off infection and disease. God has the power to heal us from our physical ailments, but he also has the power to save us from the spiritual sickness that leads to spiritual death. Our great physician lived a perfect life, one that we could not live, and took the sickness of sin upon himself. He suffered that agony that was meant for us—he suffered complete separation from God as those nails held his body upon the cross. Because of Jesus' heavenly power—the sickness of sin no longer enslaves us. Through faith, like that of the centurion, we trust in God's almighty power over sin, and we are clothed with Jesus' holiness. The world that we live in is still filled with sin, and we will still suffer sickness and disease. One day, our bodies will still be laid to rest in the grave, but thanks be to God that because of our great physician, we will not suffer eternal death, but we will LIVE—forever in the presence of God's love and care.

And so, as children, dearly loved by our Father in heaven, listen to his words and place your trust in him. Like the centurion, trust that God cares for you, that he has the power to heal you from the sickness that causes your body to suffer, and that in his power he has sent Jesus to heal us from the sickness of sin—that leads to death. Take comfort in these promises with humble hearts, not because we deserve God's love and care, but because he graciously gives us these blessings.