

I. Introduction

- A. Jesus had this favorite expression he used in many settings and situations—
1. Once he taught about God’s care— if God’s clothes the grass of field...
 - a. He said that be worried or anxious can’t add a single hour to your life
 - b. We can trust God to take care of our lives (*maybe not level we’d like*)
 - c. And if we don’t, it’s because we have such a “*little faith*” (**Matt 6:30**)
 2. Another time Jesus was taking a nap in a boat when a storm blew up
 - a. The apostles were seasoned seaman, but this storm causes a panic
 - b. They woke Jesus up, “Don’t you care we’re going to die”
 - 1) Jesus calms the sea and the storm with a word, “*Peace, be still.*”
 - 2) He asks, “*You of little faith, why are you so afraid*” (**Mt 8:26-27**)
 3. This time the apostles are in boat and Jesus comes walking on water
 - a. Peter is always the brash one; if that’s you, let me come to you;
 - b. Jesus says, “*Come on down*” Peter is OK as long as he sees Jesus
 - 1) Once he see the water and waves, then he’s not OK. He sinks.
 - 2) Calls, “*Lord save me!*” He does, “*You of little faith*” (**Mt 14:31**)
 4. Out of the blue, Jesus says, “*Beware the yeast of Pharisees & Sadducees*”
 - a. They are confused; they think he’s upset because they forgot lunch
 - b. This is right after he repeats feeding of the 5000 by feeding 4000
 - c. You can almost hear Jesus groan a bit, “*You of little faith*” (**Mt 16:8**)
- B. “*O ye of little faith.*” Jesus thought the apostles should be doing better.
1. *What about us?* What if Jesus compared **our faith** with **our lives** today?
 - a. How do we live before our friends and co-workers... *ye of little faith?*
 - b. How do we spend our money, time, and talents... *ye of little faith?*
 - c. Do we face the future with confidence, certainty or... *ye of little faith?*
 2. We continue today with “*Outcasts: Meeting People Jesus Met in Luke*”
 - a. In **Luke 7**, Jesus interacts with Roman centurion whose slave is sick
 - b. This non-Jew displays a faith Jesus hasn’t encounters in all Israel
 - c. What we see in this guy is the OPPOSITE of “*O ye of little faith*”

II. Such Great Faith

- A. Like Matthew, Luke has Jesus meet Centurion right the Sermon on Plain
1. Church tradition doesn't like gaps and likes to see this as Cornelius
 - a. Unlike in Matthew, Luke never has Jesus actually meet the man
 - 1) He sends a delegation of elders to intercede for him (**Luke 7:2-3**)
 - 2) Like Cornelius, he'd done good things for the Jewish community
 - b. He heard of Jesus (thru them?); he believes Jesus can heal his servant
 2. Jesus agrees to go... only to meet another delegation (**Luke 7:6-7a**)
 - a. If Jesus visits the house of a Gentile, might it cause him trouble?
 - b. Jesus gets criticized for everything (*how his disciples wash hands*)
 - c. Centurion knew Jewish kosher pickiness— "*don't come to my house*"
- B. But what he says next takes even Jesus by surprise (**Luke 7:7b-9**)
1. The centurion says that he is a man accustomed to giving orders
 - a. He says "Come" or "Go," people obey; he says "Jump," people say...
 - b. I had a friend years ago who retired from Army as a full-bird colonel
 - 1) He took a job in Fortune 500 communication software company
 - 2) It was hard; he'd tell people stuff and they wouldn't jump at all
 2. Centurion's point, "*You just give the order, and my servant will live*"
 - a. You don't HAVE to come to my house or do any special hocus-pocus
 - b. I believe that you have the power and authority to heal my servant
 - c. If you give the word, then it is done! There is a word for that— faith!
 3. But that kind of faith back Jesus up a step, "*was amazed at him*" (**7:9**)
 - a. I would imagine that Jesus would be a very difficult person to amaze
 - 1) Grand Canyon. He made it. Show him the ocean. Walked on it
 - 2) Only other time in the Bible that Jesus was amazed (**Mark 6:5-6**)
 - b. Centurion's faith catches Jesus by surprise; Jesus is amazed by him
 - 1) Sometimes he is annoyed that the apostles have such little faith
 - 2) He was amazed at how little faith those who saw him grow up had
 - a) Jesus says Gentile centurion has greater faith than he's seen in Israel
 - b) Luke tried pretty hard to keep the grin off his face as he wrote than line
 - c. Story ends with the drive-by healing of centurion's servant (**Lk 7:10**)

C. There are a couple of things we need to go back and highlight in story

1. **First**, this high-ranking officer did NOT pull any rank (**Lk 7:6b-7a**)
 - a. He falls all over himself declaring himself unworthy & undeserving
 - 1) Centurion was professional soldier who worked his way up ranks
 - 2) There was no officer candidate school; had to survive in late 30's
 - 3) He was officer who commands 100 men... and great deal of respect
 - b. Jews thought he *deserved* attention because of good works (**Lk 7:4-5**)
 - 1) But the centurion shunts that aside and insists that he is unworthy
 - 2) That is rare then and now; someone with strings usually pulls them!
 - c. Something we need to know deep in our bones– *we have no strings*
 - 1) Don't deserve to be in God's house! "*Nothing in my hand I bring...*"
 - 2) I not deserve it. I don't deserve it exactly like you don't deserve it
 - a) We like the idea of grace (*receiving it, not so much giving it to others*)
 - b) We know we're imperfect, but we want there to be a SLIDING SCALE
"I may not be perfect, sure, but I'm lot more perfect than a lot of people"
 - 3) No, we have to believe the best we have is garbage (**Phil 3:7-8**)
 - d. Centurion was an impressive guy; he didn't trade on impressiveness
2. **Second**, accepting his unworthiness led him to boldly act (**Luke 7:7b**)
 - a. We will never know where this Gentile soldier got this kind of faith
 - 1) Paul had a faith that pushed him around the globe to preach
 - 2) But he dramatically met resurrected Christ on Damascus Road
 - 3) In Luke's telling, the centurion had only heard about Jesus
 - b. But here he acts in a way that is amazing– it amazed even Jesus!
 - 1) He was humble and deferential; he was also bold and decisive
 - 2) His faith told him that Jesus could heal his servant– so he acted
 - c. Faith comes in all sizes and shapes– strong and weak, little and big
 - 1) Jesus says that faith that starts like a mustard seed can grow large
 - 2) Paul says that those with strong faith must watch out for the weak
 - 3) Paul's confrontation of Peter shows that strong faith can relapse
 - d. Faith is ultimately faith because it leads us to act– like the centurion
 - e. He decided Jesus could heal his servant and he put that into action

III. Conclusion

- A. Remember the times we mentioned Jesus says, “*O ye of little faith?*”
1. The difference between great faith and little faith– whether we act on it
 - a. **Money:** Will we focus primarily on money things of money
 - b. **Storms:** Will we trust God to get us through difficulties of life
 - c. **Focus:** Focus on Jesus or on priorities-people-problems
 - d. **Remember:** Will we remember all the “miracles” of the past
 2. My great-uncle using illustration of guy riding bicycle on high-wire
 - a. We went backwards, forward and handstands– amazed the crowd
 - b. Believed he could do it... until he asked them to get on handlebars
- B. There is an old Chinese curse, “*May you live in interesting times*”
1. We definitely do. This will be the last time we’ll be together for awhile
 - a. My next sermon will be done via streaming... working on that
 - b. After our prayer thing morning, we begin our “social distancing.”
 - c. Which means the introverts among us get to use our spiritual gifts
 2. A week ago, COVID-19 seemed a distant thing (*30 cases in the state*)
 - a. Many of you drove past that many confirmed cases this morning
 - b. Let’s face the coming crisis how people of faith always face crisis
 - 1) With faith God is sovereign and dependence on Him in prayer
 - 2) With more reflection on His word and maybe less on the media
 - 3) With looking out for one another– even if that must be by phone
 - 4) With far less handwringing and maybe a bit more handwashing
 - c. Church is here to serve our community; we must do that by going dark
 - d. We look forward to the time when we can together shine His light