

Sermon: Amazing Faith: Luke 7:1-10

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Tell the story (be brief!) about a time when something completely unexpected happened to you. What were your reactions?
2. Share a story where you were amazed by someone's faith?
3. What is your perception of earthly authority and how does this impact your belief in God's authority?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Review what Scripture tells about the Centurion. Who was he? What did others say about him? What did he say about himself? How was he atypical of other Romans? What do you think his background might have been?
2. What was key to the Centurion's understanding of Jesus' authority? Why did that matter in this situation? How does this reflect the 'power of the word'? (e.g. Luke 5:13, 20; 7:7, 12)
3. What is the historical meaning of Jesus' words, "I have not found such great faith even in Israel." (7:9) Compare this story with Mark 6:1-6.
4. Pastor Ashwin spoke of two applications from the Luke 7:1-10 passage:
 1. it's not how much faith we have but it is the object or focus of our faith that really matters, and
 2. a strong faith cannot coexist with a low view of God.

How does Isaiah 46:9-10 affirm these statements?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. When Jesus looks at you, where does He see you on the spectrum between biblical 'faith' and 'unbelief'? (cp. Mark 9:24) What steps can you take to move more towards biblical faith?
2. What is your response to Pastor Ashwin's question: 'If I believe in the absolute authority of Jesus over all things, how will it impact my life?'

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 8:5-13

⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶"Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly." ⁷Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?" ⁸The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For 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." ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ²When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" ³Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." ⁵He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Luke 7:1-10

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

Isaiah 46:9-10

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'

Sermon Study Summary

Have you ever wondered “What does amazing faith look like in real life?” Only one person in recorded history amazed Jesus with his faith. Luke said explicitly: “Jesus was amazed.” (7:9) At another time Jesus was amazed but by the absence of faith in His own people. (Mk 6:6) Only twice do Gospel writers say that Jesus was amazed, but over 30 times that people were amazed at Jesus’ teachings, authority and miracles.

Jesus is God. Can an all-knowing God be surprised by anything? Wonder and amazement are human responses to the unusual. Yet Jesus was amazed giving us a glimpse of His humanity. He was not amazed by how smart, righteous, generous or immoral people were but His amazement was due to faith or lack of faith. Unbelief is a spiritual force that robs us of God’s blessing and limits His activity among us; Jesus could not do any miracles in Nazareth because of their unbelief. (Mk 6:5) Faith is essential to live a life that pleases God.

What was so remarkable about the one man who WOWED Jesus with his faith? (Lk 7:1-10, Mt 8:5-13) Was he among the spiritually elite--a Rabbi, Pharisee or Apostle? No, he was a Gentile Centurion, a captain with authority over 100 soldiers, representing the government of Rome which ruled over Israel and was hated by the Jews. He was not a typical Centurion; he loved the Jews and donated to their synagogue; he was greatly concerned about his young slave who suffered a deadly illness; he earnestly sought healing for the boy.

The Centurion had heard about Jesus’ miracles and had such compassion; he sent the Jewish leaders to Jesus to come heal his servant. This was a miracle that Jewish elders would intervene on behalf of a Roman Centurion, but they thought him worthy. He must have been a ‘God-fearer,’ a Gentile who worshipped Israel’s God but had not converted to Judaism. Jesus willingly headed to the Centurion’s home. The Centurion was aware that a Jew did not enter a Gentile’s house sent friends to say that he did not deserve having Jesus in his home, but pleaded for Him to “just to say the word” and his servant would be healed. (Lk 7:6-7) Jesus’ word alone was enough. The Centurion had a humble trust in the greater and heavenly authority of Jesus and His powerful word. That “word” healed his servant. (7:10) Jesus, amazed at the Centurion’s remarkable faith, said “...I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” (7:9) The Centurion is an exemplary model of faith when facing adversity, not in its quality or quantity, but faith in Jesus’ authority and power. In contrast, people of Nazareth showed their lack of faith by rejecting Jesus’ authority. (Mk 6:6)

APPLICATIONS FOR US

1. It is NOT how much faith we have, but it is the object or focus of our faith that matters. Positive declarations of my faith are ‘faith in faith’ instead of faith in God. The question is not “Is my faith sufficient?” but “Is the One in Whom I have faith sufficient?” Will we trust God’s character despite situations we face—an economy in freefall, job losses, political instability, terrorism on the rise, troubled relationships, a health crisis? These are real tests of a believer’s faith. Biblical faith is coming to terms with Jesus’ authority and power, and being in awe of it. There is nothing we face that is outside of His jurisdiction.

Chippie the Parakeet sang cheerfully until he was accidentally sucked into a dusty vacuum cleaner, power-washed with cold water and blow dried with hot air; Chippie does not sing much anymore. (Max Lucado’s story) Are we like Chippie? Anyone has faith when sailing smooth seas but faith in the midst of a storm is the real test for each believer.

2. Strong faith cannot coexist with a LOW view of God. The difference between faith and unbelief lies in our perception of Jesus’ authority and the power of His word. His Word spoke the universe into being and sustains it (Heb 1:3). His Word freed the demon-possessed man, calmed a storm and raised a man from the dead. His Word alone healed the centurion’s servant. Our problems loom large when we shrink God. How BIG is your Jesus? Is He powerful and almighty? If I believe in the absolute authority of Jesus over all things, how does that impact my life? Can I trust Him to heal and provide? Am I in awe of Jesus’ authority and power?

The God of the Bible says: “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish my purpose.’” (Is 46:9-10) Since Jesus is God, we could use His name in these verses. Jesus is unique in His knowledge and His sovereign control over all things. He is consistent in fulfilling His purposes, faithful and true to His promises. Jesus is our Pilot who can handle any storm and bring us home. Faith tells us that the One in charge of our life is not just an all powerful God but He is our Daddy who loves us.

May God speak through His Word so that our faith arises. When faith arises, God moves as Scripture and history have shown. Faith is a trigger that releases God’s power. May God so stir our faith that we believe He will demonstrate His presence and His power in our lives and in our church!