



## Sermon, Sunday July 28, 2024 “The Faith of the Centurion”

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 7:1-10** <sup>1</sup>After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. <sup>3</sup>When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of having you do this for him, <sup>5</sup>for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.” <sup>6</sup>And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; <sup>7</sup>therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” <sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, **“I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.”** <sup>10</sup>When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

### Introduction: Jesus’ praise for the centurion

The region where Jesus worked the longest during his public life was Galilee. Today's text is the story of Jesus healing the centurion's servant in Capernaum, located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

A centurion was an officer in the Roman Empire who had about 100 men. This centurion should be seen as the person responsible for local security under Herod Antipas, the king of the area at the time. His servant suffered from a serious illness that put him at the crossroads of life and death. The centurion tried his best to cure his servant, but it was ineffective. Meanwhile, he heard a rumor that Jesus had come to Capernaum. He sent some Jewish elders to ask Jesus to heal his servant. The Jewish elders told Jesus about the centurion’s situation and why Jesus should grant the centurion’s request. The Jewish elders told Jesus that the centurion loved the people of Israel and built a synagogue for them.

After hearing the story from the Jewish elders, Jesus went to the centurion’s house. As Jesus approached his house, the centurion sent his friends to Jesus, saying, **“Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.”** (Luke 7:6,7).

However, the centurion’s attitude toward Jesus is a little strange. If Jesus came close to his house, it would be common sense to invite Him into the house. However, the centurion said he was not worthy to have Jesus come under his roof. When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said: **“I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.”** (Luke 7:9).

This kind of praise from Jesus is very rare. If we were to express Jesus' praise according to today's situation, it would be as follows. **‘The faith of someone who does not go to church is much greater than the faith of someone who does go to church.’** What was the centurion’s faith that led Jesus to praise him so much?

### Body: The Centurion’s Experience of God’s Presence

In today's text, the centurion said that he does not deserve for Jesus to come under his roof and does not even consider himself worthy to come to Jesus. The centurion's words and actions make us think that he is a very



humble person. So, is the intention of today's story to teach us that the centurion's humility is a standard of faith that we must imitate?

For those who believe in God, humility is a very important attitude in life. We cannot say that we believe in God without being humble. However, it is not easy to have a humble heart. In fact, although we can pretend to be humble, being humble is not easy. In many cases, humans are humble towards those who are stronger than them but become arrogant towards those who are weaker than them. Although it may seem humble on the outside, it is not easy to be truly humble.

In fact, today's text is not intended to say that humility is the highest level of faith. Also, it does not mean to emphasize that the centurion was humble. **The key point of today's text is what is the fundamental reason why the centurion had no choice but to humble himself so much before Jesus.**

That is, the centurion experienced Jesus as God and experienced divinity and absolute power from Jesus. He thought that he could not have Jesus in his house and that he could not dare to come before Jesus, therefore, the centurion had no choice but to absolutely humble himself to Jesus.

We must know that the same attitude among those who have experienced God is self-denial. The Old and New Testaments consistently state this fact.

Moses, who experienced God on Mount Horeb, had to take off his shoes. (Exodus 3:5) Isaiah, who experienced the holy presence of God in the temple in Jerusalem, confessed that his lips were unclean. (Isaiah 6:5) Also, Simon Peter fell at Jesus' feet and confessed: **“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”**. All of this means that they experienced divinity in Jesus. In today's text, the reason the centurion confessed that he could not handle Jesus was because he experienced the divinity of Jesus.

Now we also believe in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah. We live a life of faith with this belief, and we come to church to worship this faith. This kind of religious life is very precious, but we must think about whether our faith is the same as the faith of the centurion praised by Jesus.

In fact, it is possible to live a church life without experiencing Jesus as God. There are as many reasons for people to come to church as there are church members. Young people come to church to meet the opposite sex, people in business come to church for business, and some people come to church because they want to mingle with people. In this way, people come to church for various reasons and then enter a deep world of faith. The problem is, however, there are people who cannot enter the world of faith even as time passes. This is very unfortunate. For us, the experience of God's presence is essential in our life of faith.

But can we distinguish between those who have experienced God and those who have not? This is almost impossible. Nevertheless, if I were to describe the standard by which we can distinguish this through the teachings of today's text, it would be 'self-denial.'

In today's text, the centurion said that he could not handle Jesus coming into his house and he could not go to Jesus. In fact, the position of a centurion allows one to proudly display oneself in front of others. Also, if the centurion invited Jesus to his home and treated him to a delicious meal, it would be a joy for everyone. Nevertheless, the centurion confessed that he could not handle Jesus. He completely denied himself before the absolute authority of Jesus.

Humility and self-denial are not the same thing. These two may look similar on the surface, but they are completely different. If the virtue of humility is practiced at the level of culture in our lives, self-denial is practiced at the level of existence. That is why Jesus said, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)**. In this way, self-denial is the clearest evidence of a person who has experienced God.

However, sometimes some people misunderstand the word self-denial. Self-denial has nothing to do with abstinence, self-torture, or guilt.



So, if self-denial is the standard for experiencing God's presence, what should we do in our religious life? Today's text, Luke 7:7, the centurion's confession, "**But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed**" shows us a clear path to a relationship with the Lord.

This verse shows that our relationship with Jesus requires absolute obedience to Him as the source of life.

Do we have the trust and obedience that the centurion showed toward Jesus today? Rather, aren't we living a life of faith in disbelief and disobedience?

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what we really need is the '**one word**' of the Lord, like the confession of the centurion in today's text. In other words, we open our spiritual eyes to the amazing fact that God speaks to us, that He acts, that He heals, and that He saves. The word of the Lord has the power to fundamentally solve illness and death. Only Jesus is the Lord of resurrection.

### **Conclusion: Don't be afraid.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Please do not be afraid of the various problems that our reality brings. Financial difficulties, illness, problems with children, heartache, broken relationships, and many other difficulties that we experience in our lives are various reasons for fear in our lives.

Do not be too afraid of this dark reality. In today's text, the centurion confesses to Jesus, '**But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.**' We have the One with us who can heal us with just a word. The faith we need is complete trust in the Lord, "Lord, I hear; just say one word!" I hope that this kind of complete trust and obedience to the Lord will be with us in our life of faith. **Amen!**

