

Introduction:

- English/Phonics lesson before school starts: tomb and womb
- Our journey this summer has been on the "Goodness of God".
 - Moses said show me you glory and God showed him His goodness. Everything God is can be summed up as His goodness.
 - If we do not believe that God is good, we can't trust Him, we will not trust, therefore we will not receive from Him.
 - Last Sunday we looked at the leper in message entitle: The Picture of a Willing God.
 - The stories in the Gospels are like pictures. The picture reminds us of who God is and what He is like. Ie. When we look at photos of someone we see a picture but we remember the person, the nature of that person. Ie. Bible stories are pictures that have been taken of God. As we look at the picture we remember His nature...we remember who He is. Ie. When I look at picture of my moms flower garden I remember her. I remember her creativity. Her creativity was for other people good, their enjoyment.
 - What we see in the picture is a testimony! The testimony tells of the mercy of God. It speaks!
 - The leper's healing speaks of the goodness of God in His willingness to heal. That he stretches forth His hand and is not afraid to touch the one who comes in faith.
- Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10
- I believe, that if, we can see more from God's perspective and understand His heart we will see more clearly who He is and receive more and more consistently from Him.

I. Who Is This Guy, the Centurion?

- A. He was a Roman centurion or captain of a 100.
- B. He was unclean. Like the leper from last Sunday (Matthew 8:1-3), he was considered unclean by the Jews because he was a Gentile.
 - 1. *When the Bible speaks of something being unclean it generally meant that it was unfit to use in worship to God. Here is a man, the centurion, who built a synagogue for a people who could set foot in his house for fear of being made unclean too.
 - 2. It is amazing that Jesus is not phased by unclean things or people. So the pictures tell me that God is willing to come into our world to get to us what we need for His world.
- C. He was a Gentile. He had a label put on him. **People will put labels on you that the enemy will use to stop you. Don't receive the labels. The Gentiles had not been given the promise of God. Yet this Gentile believes. (Has faith.)
 - 1. Many people feel alienated from God for whatever reason, yet if you will only believe, the promises are available to you. The one thing Jesus asks for is that we

would have faith, believe. After your miracle you may hear Him say to you, "Go and sin no more." Go live right. But the first thing is faith in Him and His ability.

2. In the natural, one would not think a gentile to be a person of faith because of who he is. (back to the labels) I.e. A Gentile, or from the wrong side of the tracks, maybe you had an abortion, maybe you did something so bad you feel forever disqualified. To that I say, "Never underestimate a persons capacity to believe." John 3:16 "*Who so ever would believe...*" He is Gentile, an enemy of Israel, and occupier of Jerusalem, etc., and yet...he has great faith!
- D. He had a need. His servant was paralyzed and suffering terribly. Any people in here this morning have a need?
- E. He took Jesus at face value. Jesus has 'the goods' I will go to him. Unlike the religious leaders who tried to explain away Jesus, the centurion simply accepts Jesus as Jesus is.

II. What Makes The Centurion's Faith Unique?

- A. He knew where to take his impossible problems. Have you noticed in the Word of God that where the 'impossible' meets the 'Presence', the impossible is changed?
 1. The centurion approached Jesus because he had a problem and knew Jesus had power to solve it.
 2. Like the leper, Matthew 8:2, who came to Jesus and knelt down (act of submission), the centurion sends a delegation to Jesus to ask that he heal his servant (so he comes to Jesus) and believes that all Jesus has to do is to speak, from where He is at, and it will be done. (act of submission by appealing to a superior)
 3. The centurion knew Matthew 7:7; "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*" (ESV)
- B. He was not afraid. We do not pickup on this guy having any fear.
 1. Fear gives rise to doubt (leper). I know you can but am not sure you will. Fear gives rise to doubt and doubt is a thief that will steal from you every time.
 2. But regarding the centurion, I do not sense or see any fear what so ever in him.
 3. There is a night and day difference between these two pictures (leper vs. centurion) yet Jesus remains the same: moved by compassion, willing, and stirred by faith; no matter how great or insignificant that faith is.
- C. He did not let other people opinions or labels (you are a lowlife gentile) stop him from receiving his miracle. When you are trying to reach heaven it is amazing how many people will try to pull you down to where they are.
 1. If you are going to receive heavens answer you can't afford to listen to earthy ramblings. You have to listen to the Word.

2. "On earth as it is in heaven" does not happen by listening to (OPO) others peoples opinions. Opinions are like armpits, everyone has a couple and they will smell.
3. But the truth will set you free! That is us, "Bring freedom and life to people and glory to God!" Because we embrace the truth!
- D. He understood authority. This is the number one thing that stands out in this passage about this man. It 'wowed' Jesus. So, he understood authority.
 1. Understanding makes you confident. Confidence is the essence of faith. In fact, the NIV Bible reads, "*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*" (Hebrews 11:1 NIV). The centurion exudes confidence.
 2. You may ask, "I thought faith came by hearing the message, not understanding?" True: Romans 10:17 says, "*Faith come by hearing the message.*" But the message gives us understanding of who God is and how God works. And that gives us faith!
 3. "Faith does not come by striving but is the product of surrender." Bill Johnson. Yes, faith comes by hearing the message and the message by the word of God. BUT... many hear the message and never surrender to the message heard. Here is a gentile submitting to a Jewish rabbi...and he is doing it better than any other Jew in the time of Christ!
 4. He understood authority and knew: all Jesus had to do was to speak the Word. "*Just say the word from where you are and my servant will be healed.*" Matthew 8:8
 5. He knew (was confident) that his servant would be healed if Jesus would just speak the word.
 6. Remember me saying last week? "*We always reflect the nature of the world we are most aware of.*" Bill Johnson. The captain of hundreds reflected authority found in his world.

III. How Does Jesus Standout In This Snapshot?

- A. Jesus was willing to go by invitation of a centurion, through the elders of Capernaum, to heal a Gentile's servant. That has to stand out in the 'snap shot' of Jesus.
 1. It says, again, I am willing!
 2. He was not offended that the man himself did not come.
 3. And He was willing to go to an unclean man's home. I love that about Jesus.
- B. Jesus was 'wowed' by the faith of the centurion!
 1. First, Jesus marveled at the centurion!
 - a) He was astonished by and both admirable of the centurion's faith, joyful astonishment.
 - b) The greek word is used to describe the effect on someone who is watching. This mans faith affected Jesus, in a good way.

- c) I love the fact that we can "WOW!" God! I can actually do something positive that amazes Him. What can you do this week to amaze Him?
2. Secondly, "Jesus Amen-ed himself!" Jesus uses the word, "Truly!" (Matthew 8:10) or "I tell you the truth," It means **"Amen!"** When Jesus places Amen before his own sayings, both in the Synoptics and (liturgically doubled) in John, the point is to stress the truth and validity of what He is about to say. Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Jesus is 'Amen-ing' Himself before He makes his point. I.e. We amen after the fact/point. Jesus 'amens' before His point.
3. Jesus was wowed by or marveling at the man's faith. Oh, to have that kind of faith!
- C. Jesus moves from the centurions faith to an important message: The Kingdom of Heaven is for those who have faith.
1. Jesus responds and comes to a man's aid. He sees and hears the man's faith. He is 'wowed' by that faith. Therefore, He 'wows' the crowd with the message of the Kingdom! The thought is revolutionary because the way seems to have changed. The Jews mostly looked at who they were and what they did as the way in. Jesus clearly states this Gentile is getting in before you.
- a) Jesus connects the man's faith with the Kingdom of heaven.
- b) He wows the Jews by telling them that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can't get you into the Kingdom but your faith in me will!
2. *"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matthew 8:11-12, ESV)
3. We take away from the snapshot: Faith gets you in; doubt keeps you out. Matthew 8:11-12
- D. Jesus proves His point.
1. He heals the man's servant based on the man's faith. Miracles point to something/someone...Jesus.
2. When we have faith miracles happen. The miracles become the on ramp for growing faith and future works in the Spirit.

Conclusion:

- The centurion became known as a man of faith. My question to you is: Will you be known by faith?
- The snapshot today, though focused on the Centurion's faith ultimately points to the Kingdom of Heaven and the way in...BELIEVE!

Healing and salvation are all in the same package. Malachi 4:2