

Luke 7:1-17

“God Has Visited His People”

As you may recall as we exit Luke Ch 6 Jesus has given to us various beatitudes, (those attitudes that need to be in our lives as believers). He’s offered warnings and admonitions, taught us what it means to love our enemies, exhorted us that we ought not judge *hypocritically*; that we need to evaluate ourselves *inwardly* and that our lives need to be built *upon* and anchored *to* the rock *foundationally*. How is it that we accomplish that? What constitutes building upon the rock making for a strong and stable spiritual life? Obedience to the Word of God, we’re to be doers, not hearers only of God’s Word.

If you are one who crumbles, caves in and defaults to sin anytime there’s a serious trial, or significant temptation in your live I’d encourage you to consider that point. Make sure that you’re truly a doer of the word and not a hearer only, the one who is a doer will feel the pressure, will experience the storms just the same; but they’ll stand. The one who crumbles, who caves in, whose life *collapses* under the trials and tough times of life sends this signal, “I’m not really a doer of the word of God”. Don’t be deceived *learning* God’s word is not tantamount to *living* God’s word; building on the rock is *not* done through catching a lot of bible studies, but by *obeying* what you *receive* in those times through the word of God.

Vs1-5

This is sort of an interesting and no doubt unique thing going on here. Here we have a Roman Centurion (which means that he was a Roman Soldier with 100 other soldiers under his authority) seeking the help of Jesus and doing so by means of the Jewish elders. Now don’t forget that right now (on that day and at that time) Israel was under Roman oppression. That Centurion wasn’t there for his health he’d been stationed there to maintain a military presence in that area of Israel making sure that proper control of the area was kept.

Evidently while he was there something happened whereby he came into an awareness of Israel’s God and found it in his heart to want to honor the *God* of Israel and be blessing to the *people* of Israel.

But from the very get go of this Ch we see characteristics in this man that point to his humility, his nobility; and his generosity. We see it 1st of all in his attitude toward his slave. Under Roman law your slave was nothing more than your property, if you felt that your slave was no longer of any benefit, couldn't perform in a way that was of any profit to you, you could kill him with out repercussion. You were simply getting rid of your property that was no longer of any value to you. So if he became ill to the point of death, no longer able to work, it was expected that he would simply kill his slave not go to extreme measures to try and save him. But this Centurion is different; he wants to help him, is willing to even seek the Lord to intervene and heal him.

The 2nd thing that stands out about this Centurion is his apparent humility in not approaching the Lord *himself* but sending delegates on his behalf. The fact that Jewish *elders* were willing do that *for* him speaks volumes *about* him. The Jews hated Roman oppression; there's no way that a Jew would seek help for their oppressor, but the fact that these guys did means that there's something different about this Centurion. He's not your "run of the mill" Roman soldier.

It would appear as though he's even being sensitive to the fact that Jesus might be offended in dealing with Gentiles so he asked the Jewish elders to see the Lord on his behalf.

Ok, I want to move into an application or 2 concerning this portion of our text. I want you to note there in Vs 3 that it was when he heard *about* Jesus that he sent *for* and sought *after* Jesus. It's what we might call the "gospel principle" 101. People won't know that Jesus is available *to* them and what Jesus can do *for* them unless they 1st hear *about* Him. As a general rule people don't seek *after* Jesus until they 1st hear *about* Jesus and that's where you and I come in.

Jesus said, "*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*" Matt 5:14-15 The idea there being that Christ in us is the light of the world; and Jesus said that the one who follows Him wouldn't walk in darkness but have the light of life. Which is to say that this world is in the dark; and it's as we show Christ *to* them and share Christ *with* them that they're drawn to the light. It's when people hear *about* Jesus that they then have the option to seek *after* Jesus as did this centurion.

Something else I want you to see it this: even though he may've felt self conscious about the fact that he was a Gentile (who were by nature perceived by the Jews as stereotypically unclean) the Lord (nor for that matter the elders) made no distinction with regard to that fact whatsoever. His clothes didn't matter, his culture didn't matter, his ethnicity was irrelevant. What mattered is that he had it in his heart; he wanted to meet with Jesus and therefore Jesus was willing to meet with him. The same is true today; it's not about you're culture, (how you dress or what hairstyle you prefer), your ethnicity is irrelevant; what matters is the fact that we need to have an encounter with Christ that changes our lives and if we're willing to meet with Him, He's willing to meet with us. If you're willing to call *for* Jesus, to call *upon* Jesus than He will draw near to you and He will meet with you in way that somehow and in some way will change your life.

You also might notice as a little sub-point that the picture that's being painted here is that of the people of Israel (these Jewish elders) are mediating this encounter in such a way as to bring a Gentile into contact with the Living God. This Gentile is seeking Jesus with the Jews doing the footwork in between which is really the way God had ordained to reveal Himself to the world in the 1st place.

It was His plan to use Israel as a nation of priests to share the *truth* of God and be a witness of the *reality* of God to the world. Now in both the OT and in the NT there was failure ultimately in God's call upon the nation of Israel to do that and time forbids us to get in to all the particulars that surround that. Be that as it may we see a little snapshot of that here; a Gentile seeking the Lord, the Jewish elders mediating in *between* them petitioning Jesus on behalf *of* him.

Note their report of him, “He’s deserving of this request because he loves our nation and has built for us a synagogue.” You know sometimes you need to know when to debate a point and when to simply stay quite and not make a Mt out of a mole hill. Jesus could’ve said, “What do you mean he’s *deserving*, what do you mean he’s *worthy*? You obviously don’t understand the righteousness of God, the sin nature of man and the fact that can’t commend ourselves to God on the basis of works because our righteous works before God are like filthy rags before Him. The only thing he’s deserving of (or for that matter any of your are worthy of) is hellfire. Anything you get outside of that is purely the result of God’s grace!” But Jesus didn’t do that; as we’ll see He just said nothing about their statement (they were obviously anxious for this guy and wanted the Lord to meet with him) He just went with them.

Now, one last thing I want to lift out of this section then we’ll move on. In Vs 5 they say that he loves their nation, and has built them a synagogue. (BTW the way it’s phrased implies that he built it at his own expense, not that he approved one being built by them, but that personally paid for it all to be done for them). I’m just going to say it, he was kicking down in a major way for the kingdom. He was investing at a sacrificial rate into the kingdom of God. But here’s the point I’m trying to make: it wasn’t words, sentiment or warm fuzzy feelings that convinced them that he *loved* them. It was the tangible service that he did *for* them. He gave of his resources and service in such a way that benefited both the kingdom of God and the people of God.

Question: how do you demonstrate your love for God? How do others note your love for the Lord? Are you serving Him in some way? Do you give of yourself *to* Him in your worship *of* Him? Is the kingdom of God on the increase, or is some facet of kingdom business getting done due to the fact that you love the Lord? Is it obvious or ambiguous? We read in 1 John 3:18-19, “*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.*” Paul told the Galatians, “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*” Galatians 5:6 Faith displays itself in works, in service, and that service or work takes place out of the overflow of love; love for God.

Vs6-7

Here is where his humility is truly unveiled; when you read the 1st few Vs you might be tempted to think, “What, this guy too good to come to Jesus on his own; sends others on his behalf?” But when you get to this point you realize it’s not that he thought he was too good...

Rather he felt as though he wasn’t *good enough*. Again this speaks volumes when you consider the tremendous authority vested into him by the Roman military. He didn’t send servants because he had better things to do; but because he himself felt personally unworthy to be in the presence of the Lord physically.

Be it because he was a Gentile; perhaps he felt as though the Lord wouldn’t want to be around a Roman Soldier. You didn’t become a Centurion by taking ROTC in high school, this guy was battle tested, had killed a lot of men. Maybe he was ashamed, felt like there was no place for him around a man of God. A lot of soldiers feel that way; like they don’t deserve nor could they ever merit God’s grace, or God’s forgiveness after what they’ve done having taken human lives in some war campaign. But Jesus doesn’t say a word about any of that; He just responds to the man’s call. Listen, if you call upon Jesus; if you want to meet with Jesus He’ll be there for you. War is a part of life; it’s unfortunate but sin results in all kinds of unfortunate tragedies. Jesus didn’t demoralize this guy for being a soldier; as a matter of fact every Centurion that the bible depicts it does so in an honorable light. There’s not so much as a single negative connotation in the bible about being a soldier. We should thank God that people are willing to lay down their lives to keep us safe at night; would to God that every soldier had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ would call upon Him and seek after Him as did this Centurion.

Real quick; not the nature of humility: in Vs 4 the elders say he’s “deserving” which is the same basic word that he uses in Vs 7 when he says that he didn’t think himself “worthy” to come to Him. Others see a quality in him that he himself is unable to detect, that’s the nature of humility. It’s kind of an allusive trait in that as soon as you realize you have it, it’s gone. It’s nothing that you yourself can project or promote, it’s seen in you by others.

Beyond that he realizes that Jesus doesn’t even need to be there to get the job done, all He has to do is say the word (this is incredible insight on his behalf), notice.

Vs8

So, “Not only am I unworthy to be in Your presence physically but I also know that it’s not even necessary for you to be with my servant directly in order that he might be healed.” He drafts this conclusion all based upon his understanding of authority. He says, “I’m under the authority of others, and others are under the authority of me; if I tell someone under my authority to do something it gets done whether I’m there to personally see to it or not. They obey me unquestioningly. Even so I know that my servants sickness; I know that disease and/or affliction is subject to Your will and You are endowed with authority over any and all ailments that may plague humanity and if You will just say the word; Your will, will be obeyed with out question. This sickness will submit to You and leave my servant at Your command.” Wow!

That’s pretty incredible insight and incredibly powerful faith! He trusted in the power and in the authority of the word of the Lord. Kinda makes ya think doesn’t it? Over and over again throughout the scriptures we’re informed *of* and exhorted to trust *in* the power of the word of God, the question is do we really believe it? When the chips are down do you believe that the gospel message is the *power of God* to salvation for everyone who believes? That the pages of this book (the bible) contain the power to transform lives and translate us from the power of darkness into the light of life? Hebrews Ch 1 declares that God upholds *all things* by the *power of His word*. There’s power in the word of God. The power isn’t in my ability to communicate it, how eloquent or are articulate I present it; the power is in *God’s word* not my words. This Centurion recognized the authority that Jesus had and that He didn’t have to be physically present to do miraculous works.

That should speak to you and me, just because Jesus isn’t with you physically doesn’t mean He can’t work powerfully/miraculously in your life and on your behalf. (Look at Vs 9)...

Vs9-10

Evidently Jesus doesn’t even need to say the word, if He even *wills* it, it’s done. 2 Things that catch our attention about Vs 9. #1 Jesus *marveled*, it’s pretty rare to find Jesus marvel about *anything*; only a few times in the scriptures we find Him marveling each time it’s over faith. He marveled over the *amount* of this Gentile’s faith, and He marveled over the *lack* of Israel’s faith. Makes you wonder how He perceives your faith doesn’t it? Does He marvel at the amount of my faith, or the lack thereof? Oh that God would increase our faith, huh?

Again the fact that this guy was a Gentile meant nothing to Jesus; He was moved not by his national heritage but by his faith.

The 2nd thing I want to draw your attention to is Jesus' opinion of this man; He commended his great faith even above those who had been entrusted with the oracles of God. He applauded his faith, stopped and turned around to the crowd to say, "Check this guy out; this faith is incredible!" His opinion was that he was a man of remarkable faith; He marveled *at* him and gave a very high opinion *of* him. How would the Lord describe you, what's Jesus' opinion of me? Would there be something about our lives that Jesus could stop and point to others in a positive way about what they could learn by our walk *before* Him or our relationship *with* Him?

Vs11-12

Nain is about 25 miles from Capernaum so they were hoofing it to get there and we love the Divine timing of the Lord. You have to see this scene in your mind's eye; the fact that this was this widow's only son compounds the problem because it meant for her a destitute life of poverty and misery. Here we have the collision of 2 crowds at the city gate and the crowds are full of contrast.

One crowd full of gladness, the other full of sadness; one crowd was rejoicing at the works Jesus had done, the other was weeping over a widow's loss of her only son. One crowd headed for the city, the other to the cemetery; death was at the center of one crowd, the Prince of Life was at the center of the other. Both were only sons, one destined to live, the other destined to die for the sins of the world; Jesus comes face to face with His final enemy.

One has pointed out that spiritually speaking every one of us are in one of these 2 crowds. Either headed into the city made with out hands whose builder and maker is God. Or we're headed for the cemetery being dead in sin and under the condemnation of God. The difference of course being whether or not we're in the company of Christ having received Him into our lives as our Lord and as our Savior.

But you guys these are practical pictures of ministry, real people, with real problems who find hope in Christ and His compassion toward their lives. Look at Vs 13

Vs13

Oh man, you can almost see it can't you, you can almost sense it. This is one of those scenes overwhelmed with anticipation, expectation, what's Jesus going to do. He puts a stop to this whole procession and notice what it was that snagged His heart. Was it the young man who'd died? No; it was the broken heart of a mother who'd lost her only son. You guys this is critical to understand, people too often think that Jesus wouldn't want anything to do with them because they're too big of a wreck. In reality the Lord's heart always hones in on the one who's hurting the most. There's something about a broken heart that compels the Lord to draw near. After all the scriptures declared He'd been sent to *heal* the brokenhearted. The psalms declare, "*The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*" Ps 34:18 He looks *at* her, has compassion *on* her and says *to* her, "Do not weep."

Vs14-15

I'm just going to say it; this is kinda freaky! You kinda wonder what the pallbearers did? Jesus gives us a precursor to final mission to abolish death. Jesus gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did. Death is here swallowed up in victory.

When you study the scriptures you'll discover that Jesus knew how to ruin a perfectly good funeral! That we know of He never attended nor officiated one service; but rather when He showed up the dead were raised up. Jesus didn't care too much for death; the wages of sin, the sorrow and separation that it brings. He regarded it as an enemy to be defeated.

Jesus presented him to his mother; you kinda wonder what he said...we don't have any words recorded from anyone Jesus raised from the dead. The things that pertain to life after death that we need to know God has shared with us in His word; other reports are irrelevant.

Strictly speaking this young man wasn't resurrected but resuscitated. He would die again; when the resurrection happens it will be never to die again. Jesus was the 1st fruits of the resurrection; He rose from the dead in His resurrection body never to die again.

But note this fact, Jesus raised him then reunited him to his family; it should stir us to the reunion that will take place when the Lord returns and *we're* reunited with *our* loved ones who've preceded us to heaven.

Vs16-17

The crowd once moments ago mourning and tearful are now rejoicing and praising God; what made the difference? A personal encounter with Jesus Christ Don't miss the fact that though the Gentile had great faith, we read nothing of this mother's faith; how great it was or how much it lacked. Jesus was just moving according to His sovereign desire meeting the need of a grieving mother being moved with compassion.

We can't help but draw attention to the phrase: "God has visited His people." They had no idea how true that was. God has visited us in the person of Jesus Christ, with but a word from Jesus we awaken out of dead in sin to alive in Him. Which crowd are you in today? Are you following Jesus into the "city whose builder and maker is God"? Or are you headed for the cemetery in eternal separation from God; where is Jesus in the equation of your life. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom 6:23

Prayer Points:

Lord Jesus we praise You today; You've conquered the grave and have defeated death. You are the resurrection and the life and we believe that by believing in You though we may die, yet will we live. Increase our faith; and may our faith be demonstrated through serving You, sacrificing for You out of the overflow of our *love* for You. Return us to our 1st love relationship with You...

If after sober reflection you would say of yourself that you're not in that crowd that has Christ in the center of it and your life is filled with pain, and sorrow and sin; Jesus can give you new life today; right here, right now. Jesus tasted death that you might live forever with Him being forgiven of your sin through faith in Him. Let me encourage you to call *upon* Him and give your heart *to* Him even now.