

Faith “just say the word”

 Welcome and Opening Scripture

Hymn: MP 564 Praise to the Lord the Almighty

Bible Reading: Ps 92

Prayer of adoration and praise.

Children’s talk The man with the wibbly wobbly legs

Song MP 1008 The Lord is my Shepherd

Notices Anniversary Service 17th Oct. meal?

Communion

Main reading: Matthew 8:5-13 (page 972), Luke 7:1-10 (page 1035)

Hymn: We praise Thee, O God! For the Son of Thy love, (bulletin)

Sermon **Great Faith – “just say the word”**

Hymn MP 264 I believe in Jesus (new audio)

Close -----

Listen to today’s sermon by clicking on the link at www.knbc.org. The audio file is [21_10_03.mp3](#).

Such great
Faith
 “Just say the word”

Exordium

- When a traveler in the early days of the west, came to the Mississippi, he discovered there was no bridge. Fortunately it was winter and the great river was covered over with ice. But the traveler was afraid to trust himself to it, not knowing how thick it was. Finally, with infinite caution, he crept on his hands and knees and managed to get halfway over. And then he heard - yes he heard singing from behind. Cautiously he turned, and there, out of the dusk, came another traveler, driving a four-horse load of coal over the ice, singing as he went!

That was not crass stupidity, but a true assessment producing confident faith

We continue in our ‘People Jesus met’ series. Today it is the Centurion found in Matthew 8:5-13 a man commended for his **faith**, he had **great faith**.

Today let us learn what we can about living by faith in Jesus Christ.

Several centurions are mentioned in the NT, this one here in Mt 8:5-13 and Lu 7:1-10. Then in Ac 10:1-48 the generous and devout Cornelius the first

fruits to Christ from the non-Jews. Centurions are also mentioned from Acts 22 onwards as those who got Paul out of more than one sticky situation.

A centurion was a Roman officer commanding a hundred soldiers; similar to "captain" in modern times. They were promoted to this office because of their good conduct and trustworthiness. They are favourably noticed in the Gospels and Acts. This one we are looking at this morning is a godly man and eminently so. The Lord has his people from every walk of life.

What, when and where – the first questions to ask when looking at a passage in the Bible.

Firstly it was Capernaum - **When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum** Mt 4:12,13. So there he is in this significant Galilean lakeside town. It had a synagogue which we are told had been financed or part financed by this Centurion. Those around are quick to recognise this and say **he loves our nation and has built our synagogue**.

He is not a Jew. Has been posted to Israel and was probably in charge of the garrison there. Had God in his sovereign design purposed him there – certainly! So he has placed you where you are – for a good purpose – so ask Lord what do you have for me here? What would you have me do? Don’t buck against, push back against his revealed will and purpose for you.

- My father who worked for the Foreign Office asked for his first posting and it was accepted.

Maybe the Centurion had asked to come to Israel. Maybe he had met some Jews and been attracted to Yahweh, the God of the Bible, the one true God. As had Lydia in Philippi and many others.

When

Both Matthew and Luke have this incident placed directly after the sermon on the mount see how Luke start: **“1 When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.**

In Matthew’s account where we have the fullest retelling of the S on the mount - we are immediately given examples of what a sermon should do.

- **Yes God’s word should do something!** - Every Sermon should do something, there are not to be ‘interesting’ or just that was ‘nice’

The whole point of Jesus teaching about the Kingdom of God is that on my own I can do nothing - nor can I even enter it. It should leave me crying out “Lord help me”. The way in to know God and his power is for those poor in Spirit. That is the way of the CROSS. “Lord have mercy on me a sinner” Those empty will receive and be filled. Do you hunger and thirst? If you

don't then it means you believe – wrongly – that you are fine as you are. This is self-righteousness, as a Pharisee, a way Jesus strongly opposes.

So eyes down - Let us look at the passage - Here we have three people – Three needy people. There is the Leper, his needs are obvious, - there is the Centurion, he is concerned for a sick and dying member of his household.

Then there is a woman; Peter's mother in Law. She too is sick with a fever.

Here there are no names, they represent you and I, male and female, rich and poor, strong and weak, probably the young and old. The able and the disabled. Here we see by faith a miracle close up - and one done from afar.

All three – plus many others - experience Jesus' power. Jesus' work is not in a vacuum, his desire is always to engender faith, he seeks to work in response to faith, from a heart that trusts him, relies on him - and proves him – through the thick and thin of life.

Jesus's supernatural power was displayed in healing all who came to him.

Mt 8:17 **This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."** Here is the suffering servant and the King who was to come. Isaiah 35:5 says that these healings are a sign that the Kingdom of God has come, the King has arrived.

Both the leper and the centurion express faith in Christ. **A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."** 8:2 Then v5 **a centurion came to him, asking for help.**

✚ **Both demonstrate faith in Christ - and both receive what they ask for.**

Now Jesus did many miracles - the right response being to see and believe. Some did, but many didn't. John 6:66 is the saddest of verses. Having seen the miracles we are told **From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.** - they walked away. They saw and did not believe.

This Centurion has not up to this point seen Jesus **The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him,**

He has heard, he has considered and made the right conclusion. Have you?

Faith comes through hearing – just as you are now, you are hearing – will this show itself in your heart by trusting him with your life - that is faith.

✚ Renowned Christian author A.W. Tozer: **The Bible recognizes no faith that does not lead to obedience, nor does it recognize any obedience that does not spring from faith. The two are opposite sides of the same coin.**

The centurion is faced with a problem - let us see faith in action!

Every day has its trouble, in your life you will have problems, hardships, difficulties sudden circumstances that leave you in pain – like the Christian walking his children to school and was run over and is now seriously ill in hospital, they are directly or indirectly the result of sin in this fallen world.

So with this centurion. For all that was going right with him - he had trouble - the sickness and impending death of his servant, Luke 7:2 the **centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die.**

He is concerned for him. Many came to Christ for their children, but this is the only instance of one that came to him for a servant.

What do you do with life's tragedies? will you take them to Jesus? Do you? **Will you go to Him first? You can trust Him, rely on Him, depend on Him!**

The centurion does not run off to the therapists, or counsellors, but to Christ.

We should be grateful to doctors but is it they you trust? Or the Lord Jesus the author of life, the one who gives life, sustains life and will take life away

The centurion came to Jesus, he came humbly seeking, **asking for help.** Here is a man poor in Spirit - seeking help from the right One – in the right way.

The centurion always had people come before him - yet he says to Jesus.

Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. how he sees himself!

The elders whom he sent to Jesus spoke highly of him, "*what a great man*",

Luke 7:4,5 **"This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue."** He 'deserves' your attention. Jesus you should recognise his goodness! - they spoke him up – he spoke himself down. No says the centurion **"I do not deserve to have you come under my roof."**

Despite his high status in society - what low thoughts he has of himself, -

But what high thoughts he has of Christ who cut no figure in this world.

This Centurion, this outsider, honoured Jesus as the true Son of God, even though he's the One despised and rejected of men.

A prominent local figure he takes no heed of his position but comes cap in hand to beg for help. He is poor in spirit, a pauper!

The greatest of men must turn beggars, if they are to receive from Christ.

In calling Jesus Lord he owns Christ's sovereignty, and in faith refers the case to him, to his will, in a simple trusting request. "I know he can do it".

Faith definition “**Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.**” Heb 11:1-2

The Centurion's faith wasn't blind belief NO - as a God-fearer who had built the synagogue he had heard the OT scriptures read and had drawn the right conclusion - that this was the promised One written about from Moses on.

He had got it right! Faith always has an object. Faith is being confident in that object. The other person's ability to act. He could see Jesus clearly

God sees every act of devotion “**He who sacrifices thank-offerings honours me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.**” Ps 50:23

✚ Faith honours God - and God honours faith! x2

7 Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." That is Jesus' response to faith!

✚ Humble souls are made more humble by Christ's grace to them.

See his great faith – No - **just say the word, and my servant will be healed.** x2

The more humility the more faith, the stronger will be our confidence in Jesus Christ. He had an assurance of faith not only that Christ could cure his servant, but that he could cure him at a distance. Jesus does not need to be there, he doesn't need to touch or do anything he only needs to speak, **but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.**

Many wish to see a doctor but these days it is a phone call, or a video link up, they make a stab at a diagnosis and try to find out what is wrong. There will be advice, a prescription to pick up, wait and see and who knows

✚ No doctor can cure from a distance – nor can he cure close up either

But Jesus can. x2

Will you come to this same Jesus believing?

What should I believe? Well what did the Centurion believe about Jesus?

It was that Jesus had authority. x2 The Centurion understood authority.

The Centurion is himself under authority - and he has authority 9 **For 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."**

The centurion understands. Everyone in the army understands authority.

So he recognises authority when he sees it in other. When Jesus finished speaking in the famous chapters 5-7 it ends with the people being amazed at his teaching Why? ... **because he taught as one who had authority** x2 Mt 7:29

Jesus has divine authority over all things, He can provide food for the hungry thousands in their need, demons submit to him, so too the wind and the waves, so too sickness and death.

Jesus has divine power to provide for you, to heal that sickness should he wish, to heal that broken relationship, to do a work to change you, - and your family member. He has the power to change anything – and everything

✚ The centurion, like the others hears – and he believes.

There are some here who are trying to understand more, there are areas where you are confused.

Understanding is the reward of faith. x2 Therefore seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand. Augustine.

And so when he asks he receives - Jesus said: **If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.**" Mt 21:22

- Hotel in Malta two women shouting from their balconies, trapped.
- There are many who shout and pray in their time of need, like those two women shouting out for help, perhaps someone will hear and respond.
- Many pray with no idea if there is anyone above the ceiling, but just in case someone is there, just in case there is, I will try.

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Heb 11:6

Can you see that He can because he is God! That is why he is able – he has power to do all things because he is God.

✚ Jesus is willing - and he is willing because God is a willing God.

If you come in the right way – and he knows your heart - you will receive x2

The leper who came to Jesus had faith – real acting faith. This centurion did not bring his man and Christ commended his faith – a deep *trusting faith*.

That is because the reality of your faith is known by God.

“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away?” Jer 23:23

- When a minister is sent for to a sick friend, he can but say, *I will come and pray for him*; but Christ says, *I will come and heal him*

Jesus Christ is God - and so every disease and trouble is under his control, so let all who belong to Christ be greatly comforted!

So let us live by faith

Does Jesus have power over everything? YES you say? Good then let us ..

1. Give of our money until it hurts, - that is true giving – knowing he will meet my every need as he promises to.
2. Then give the best of your time to him knowing he will sort out all those other urgent calls on your time. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these other things, yes all of them – will be given to you as well. A command with a promise.
3. Will you push the comfort boundaries, energy boundaries because he will give you the energy you need.
4. Will you forgive others because if so he promises to forgive your many sins
5. Will you be patient with others, not saving things you shouldn't and make every effort to say things you should – for he promise grace to enable you to?

The centurion believed that Jesus had to power and authority. He saw the ice was thick - He believed he could take care of this urgent trouble in his household - and Jesus did. Jesus cures his servant – healed from the moment he spoke the word.

✚ Faith in God makes great optimists. In Burma, Adonarim Judson was lying in a foul jail with heavy chains around his ankles, his feet bound to a bamboo pole. A fellow prisoner said with a sneer on his face, “Dr. Judson, what about the prospect of the conversion of the heathen?” The instant reply was, “The prospects are as bright as the promises of God.”

His faith is commended

10 When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

The Centurion's faith is commended. Does Jesus commend your faith?

Live the life of faith in Christ – it is the best life – and it will be richly rewarded - **11 I 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.**

No-one here is descended from Abraham – may Jews today claim to be - but are not sure – few can prove it - but are you a son of Abraham by faith?

- Mark when baptized will tell his story - Christ has clearly done a work in his heart. This is not the result of sitting in church, or having Bible studies, or long discussions with Christian friends he had none, it is not the result of going forward at an evangelistic rally – but yet Mark has a living and active faith in Christ and a clear desire for holiness.

There are some here who have sat under God's word for weeks, months years and yet have never responded to Jesus. Maybe it is you who have heard his word, heard all the evidence and yet still do not live by faith in Jesus.

Live your life by faith in the Son of God then you will welcomed into the kingdom of glory in heaven, you will come cheerfully and sit down with Abraham. And all the men and women of Faith drawn from the nations though the centuries will be there, everyone who has trusted Christ and followed him – Will you be there?

The warning of disbelief

There were many in Israel who knew God's word and promises, had seen the miracles had every chance to respond in trust and faith – but wouldn't. Those clear evidences are rejected. **12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

Disbelief is a sin - In hell there will be great grief and regret, floods of tears shed to no purpose; eternal anguish of spirit and the dreadful unceasing wrath of God. - Make sure that is not you. It is not yet too late to turn to Christ and trust in his finished work on the cross. Everything has been done, the resurrection proves it – now trust him for it!

Pride lurks in every heart irrespective of status. But humility in high places is rare. What Jesus saw in the Centurion was not his abilities but his attitude.

The anchor sign in church - anchor in the storms - the anchor the rock in harbour to tie to and pull yourself - So faith pulls me in to my eternal haven

✚ Saving faith must be seen in living faith. x2

Will you recognise who Jesus is and trust him completely - **just say the word** x2

- Rico Tice speaks in CE of spending five minutes waiting on the stairs at a smart London hotel to find that he was standing next to Prince William. He failed to recognise who he was. – until he was beckoned away – and then it was too late. He failed to recognize the future King of England. That is one thing but to miss the recognized Kings Jesus when you have the chance is much more serious – that has eternal consequences!

Do you recognise who Jesus really is? Have you seen that Jesus is the King and God? Then trust him for everything. Pray believing “Lord **just say the word**”, x2 and you will have it.

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