

Luke 7:1-10

¹After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave.

⁴When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us."⁶And 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; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For 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."

⁹When 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." ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Luke 7:1-10, 2016

This is an interesting story this weekend.

The characters, the plot, there is mystery that causes you to wonder, there are so many things we aren't told that would help us understand what this story means,

in Jesus time and ours.

In this story is a Centurion who we are told very little about;

Was he Roman? Jewish? Had he fought in any wars?

What is his connection with the Jewish Community and why did he build their Synagogue?

The Centurion has a slave who is very valuable to him.

Valuable, how? as a friend? as a good worker? as a member of the household?

What ever, he was still a slave.

The Centurion's slave is dying.

He hears about Jesus and calls on his Jewish acquaintances to go and get Him so that he can come and heal the slave.

It might seem on the one hand that the Centurion could be taking some things for granted by expecting Jesus to just do what he is requesting,

yet on the other hand possibly he had heard enough about Jesus to know how He would respond—that he would come,

and He would heal the slave.

They go and tell Jesus about this Centurion and tell him that this Centurion is worthy because he built their synagogue.

Jesus goes with them, headed to a Centurion's house. Now how odd is that?

If the Centurion is Roman a Jewish person should not go into his house.

Why would Jesus go to the house of someone so different from himself, a total stranger,

and possibly a perceived enemy of Israel whose land is being occupied by the Roman army,

to heal the man's slave who likely was not Jewish?

Well the Centurion changes his mind and sends friends this time to tell Jesus do not bother coming to my house, I am not worthy to have you here.

“just say the word and it will be done.”

You have authority in these matters just I have authority of men who obey me.

Of course you remember the reading said that Jesus was “amazed!”

He had never seen such faith, even in all Israel.

When the Jews who were sent by the Centurion, and the friends, returned they found the slave in good health.

We aren't even told in this story what Jesus said, if anything to restore the slave to health.

There are a lot of details missing.

Now there is a lot going on in this story, a number of characters and shifts in direction.

So let's put this story in its context to see what possible point is being made by this story.

If you go back into Chapter 6, only 3 verses back from the beginning of our story, Jesus is wrapping up His Sermon On The Plain.

In the Gospel of Matthew it is known as the Sermon On The Mount.

And in that verse Jesus says,

“I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them.”

He is saying, let me show you what my followers do, what my disciples do.

He then goes, and at the request of this probably Roman Centurion, a stranger, heals a slave.

He doesn't demand, or even ask either of them to convert or change or follow,

He simply heals the slave and commends the Centurion for his faith.

This is what Jesus' disciples do.

We can't all go around healing people just by giving a command the way Jesus could,

and so what does this look like today?

With the way people might miss worship on any given weekend you may not have noticed that there is one fairly regular person missing tonight.

Mel Krum sat right back there on the isle about 5 rows up from the back.

He wont be there anymore because Mel passed away in his sleep last Saturday night.

His family and friends gathered here for his memorial service yesterday.

Mel was a guy who didn't say much, but he was a guy who did a lot.

Mel was a disciple of Jesus.

Mel healed and gave new life to many people along the way of his life,

and it all began in his own family.

Mel grew up in a farm community in Pennsylvania where he learned a lot about helping out the neighbor.

He was shaped by these lessons and they informed the rest of his life which he spent changing the lives of others.

You see when Mel and his wife Gloria met and fell in love she had two children from a previous marriage,

and when they got married Mel adopted them, no question. He made them his.

He and Gloria then decided they would share their life and home with two more children and adopted another boy and a girl.

Mel changed their lives, gave them new life.

Like many men his age Mel was called to serve in WWII and became a tank commander in the Army.

This led to his involvement with the American Legion where he served others.

Mel's family had the reception yesterday at the American Legion Hall here in Port Orange,

and they talked about how he had helped so many people there who couldn't do their taxes themselves or afford to have someone do their taxes,

and he did them for free.

Mel's generosity and love for others was demonstrated in the volunteering he did especially in his years of retirement giving his time, energy,

knowledge and skills through his activity with the United Way, Meals on Wheels,

Florida Healthcare and through his involvement with the Elks Club, Eagles and VFW.

I know there were some in our own congregation who had their tax returns prepared by Mel over the years.

He went about helping out total strangers, making their life better,

in a way giving them new life because someone cared enough about them to help out.

To my knowledge Mel was one who didn't make a big deal out of all the things he did, it was just part of what he was supposed to do with his life.

He was raised that way, that is who he was.
Living like this is what we in the church call discipleship.
This is what the followers of Jesus do,
the ones who come to him, hear His words and act on
them,
and we would do well to call it discipleship.

God was with Mel doing these things all his life, changing
lives, changing the world.

We have another passage in the Gospels, this one from
Matthew the 25th chapter, that may help us out here.

There we hear Jesus' call to feed the hungry, give drink
to the thirsty, welcome to the stranger,
to clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the
prisoner.

And the king says in this parable,

“...just as you have done it to one of the least of
these...”

Jesus showed the crowd that followed him that day what
someone is like who comes, hears and acts.

Mel shows us in our contemporary world what that
someone is like.

He may not be here but his life keeps on giving.

You will be hearing a lot about discipleship in the coming
weeks.

I have looked ahead at our gospel lessons for the coming weeks and one right after the other shows us what this someone is like

who comes to Jesus, hears His words and acts on them.

This will be a great segue into the congregational gathering we will be having on June 26.

You may remember that we had a congregational meeting a couple of weeks ago in which we immediately recessed until June 26.

That meeting will immediately follow worship and we will have a Pot Luck. After we eat we will reopen our meeting with conversation first about discipleship,

and then about important matters that you as members of this church need to discuss that have to do with our mission, ministry, priorities and goals;

that have to do with our future.

A major priority for our council this year is outreach and evangelism.

How are we like someone who comes to Jesus, hears His words and acts on them in our outreach and evangelism?

Outreach and evangelism are very different things today from what they were in the church of the 20th century;

the one of your earlier church memory.

This discussion has many facets to it.

We need a new strategy.

There are a couple of other things to discuss also, one of which is,

what would you think about having a columbarium in our memorial garden?

We will have information for you about that during the meeting.

In our decisions about all these matters I believe Jesus words should guide us.

Are these the actions of one who has come to Jesus and heard His words?

For those of you who have been around here for a few years anyway,

you know we have come a long way in the last 6 years.

For those of you who haven't been here long ask your friends here who have been and they will affirm that.

We have come a long way because we have done what Jesus talks about here.

We continually come to Jesus,

We listen to His words,

And we have acted on them.

And this should be at least part of our guide because the one who acts on Jesus' words brings healing to community and world just as Jesus did for this Centurion and slave,

one who brings new life to the dying,

grace to the sinner, release from the evil in this world to the suffering,

as we will hear in our gospel lessons between now and the 26th.

Continue to come here to Jesus, hear His words and lets see where we go from here.