

TFTD 2025.08 Thursday 13th March

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant Luke 7:1-10



This tombstone from the Grosvenor Museum in Chester commemorates Caecilius Avita, who was an Optio (second-in-command to the centurion) in the 20th Legion (Leg XX Fretensis) which was stationed in Chester at the end of the first century AD.

“A Centurion had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of you having you do this for him, for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.” 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. Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.”.....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.” When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.”

The heart of today’s parable is not the healing of this slave. That seems strange on one level because without it the parable would not exist. What matters most to Luke and indeed to Jesus is the centurion’s faith.

Who is this man? Presumably he was a middle-ranking soldier stationed in Capernaum. He was part of the occupying forces of Rome. He was a living symbol of the enemy - an oppressor of the people. He would have been receiving regular orders from his commander and giving orders in turn to all those under him.

Often soldiers in his position would despise the local people and their culture but this man did not. He looked on the Jewish people through a different lens. He had seemingly come to respect and then perhaps love these people and had even played the part of a benefactor. He had paid for the building of the local synagogue. Luke presents him, as he does another centurion in Acts 10, as a wise Gentile, looking in at Israel and Israel’s God from the outside. There he saw something attractive and hopeful which he did not find in his own culture. And this was manifestly even more so in what he saw in Jesus. He was open to finding new truth in this strange and different way of life.

Jesus responds to the first call for healing and sets out to help. But he is astonished by the second humble message calling him “Lord” which says that Jesus should not trouble himself to come. Often Jesus does and says things which astonish people. It’s not so often that he is astonished himself! The reason is the sheer quality of this man’s faith. It is the expression of this simple, clear and trusting belief that when Jesus commands something it will be done. In contrast to many local people who struggled to see God at work in Jesus, the Centurion could see the power

and integrity which was at work in him. He saw something authentic here in which he could trust!

He recognised in Jesus one under divine authority and made this unusual step of faith. “Only speak the word and let my servant be healed.”

As we have already seen in our reflections on Luke there is an understanding that God is at work in all sorts of unexpected people. Jesus has encountered a lot of trouble in reminding his own people of this.

It’s a reminder to us in Lent not to try to close God down and to be open to all his possibilities for us and for our world.

**True and gracious Lord,
By your liberating word
Help us to let go of our pride, our fear, our distrust,
That we ourselves may be healed,
Made whole by your command.
Amen**

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