

Sermon for the Second Sunday after Pentecost

LUKE 7:1-10

HYMNS: 906, 903, 566, 849, 625, 865.

INTROIT: Psalm 81: 1-10,13.

P Sing aloud to God, our Strength! Shout loudly to the God of Jacob!

C **Begin to sing a melody, and play the tambourine, the delightful lyre, and the harp!**

P Blow the horn at the new moon, at the full moon, and on the day of our Feast!

C **For this is a Prescription for Israel, a Decision of the God of Jacob.**

P He set it in place as a Testimony for Joseph, when he went throughout the land of Egypt. I used to hear a language that I did not understand:

C **“I have removed the burden from his shoulder. His hands have been freed from the basket.**

P “When you were in trouble, you called out, and I rescued you. I answered you in the secret place of thunder. I tested you at the water of Meribah.

C **“Listen, my people, that I may admonish you, O Israel, if you will listen to Me!**

P “There shall be no strange god among you. You shall not worship any foreign god.

C **“I am the LORD, your God, and I have brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, that I may fill it!**

All: **“If only My people would listen to Me! If only Israel would walk in My ways!**

COLLECT: O God, by Your almighty Word You set in order all things in heaven and on earth. Put away all things hurtful, and give us those things that are beneficial for us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

READINGS:

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:5-12

Gospel: Luke 7:1-10.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon for this Sunday is written in Luke 7:1-10, which was our Gospel reading before.

1 When Jesus had finished all His sayings to the people who were listening to Him, He entered Capernaum. **2** A certain centurion had a slave, who was dear to him, and who was sick and about to die. **3** When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him to ask Him to come and heal his slave. **4** They came to Jesus and earnestly pleaded with Him, “He deserves to have You do this for him, **5** because he loves our nation, and he has personally built the synagogue for us.” **6** Jesus began to go with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to tell Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself! For I do not deserve that You should come in under my roof. **7** That is why I did not think that I was worthy to come to You either. Rather, just give an order, and let my servant be healed! **8** For I also am a man placed under authority, and I have soldiers under myself. I order one of them, ‘Go!’ and he goes; and another, ‘Come!’ and he comes. I order my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” **9** When Jesus heard these words, He was astonished at him. He turned to the crowd that was following Him and said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith, even in Israel.” **10** When the messengers returned to the house, they found that the slave was well.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify in Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ:

Peace be with you.

Relying on somebody else’s say so and authority is something that we have to be very careful about. Relying

on somebody saying “So and so said this” or “So and so did that,” is dangerous and you can easily get yourself into trouble, especially if you pass that information on without checking it out first. - It’s relying on someone’s authority without investigating the facts for your self. - However, the very nature of the Christian faith is that we believe that one statement of our Lord is stronger and holds more authority than the whole world. - We should trust that authority of God’s word even though we can’t investigate any of it or confirm it by observing it first hand. - This morning, in our Gospel account shows us two relationships that our saving faith should have, - a proper attitude to God’s authority, - and genuine humility before God.

Firstly, our faith should have proper respect for God’s authority. - This army officer’s faith is the most important thing in this passage. The two occasions when Jesus marvelled at someone’s faith and praised it were when the persons were non-Jews, - this Roman army officer, - and the Syro-Phoenician woman whose daughter Jesus also healed from a distance [Mk 7:24-30.] On another occasion Mark tells us that Jesus was amazed at the unbelief. - That was about the people of His own hometown, Nazareth! - He performed only very few miracles at Nazareth. [Mk 6:1-6.] It’s written that a prophet isn’t accepted in his hometown, and that was true of Jesus, too. - He seemed too ordinary to them to be the promised Messiah, or even a prophet. **"Is not this the Carpenter's son"** they said.

Now a centurion was an officer over a hundred soldiers. It was comparatively a low rank and any soldier who had proved himself could expect promotion to this position. This Centurion may have even reached the rank of First Cohort, called *Primi Ordines*, which he would have been in charge of up to six groups of a hundred men, a fairly important man, - because of that, this army officer’s strong faith had a connection to his view of authority. Luke makes it very plain that the officer didn’t go to Jesus in person, but through messengers. As an army man, he regularly expected to get orders from above, - to carry them out, - and to give orders to others. He believed that Jesus had the power, and the ability to carry out what he was asking. - He accepted that just like in the army the word of a superior officer brought instant obedience, - Jesus had authority to command the sickness to leave his slave. He even believed that Jesus didn’t have to come to his house in person, but just give the order. He clearly believed that Jesus was a man with great authority and power. He told his messengers to address Him as “Lord.” That meant more than just plain “Sir.” He recognised that Jesus was great.

At this time word of Jesus’s ministry had gotten around. Large crowds were following Him wherever HE went. They heard a note of authority in His teaching that was different from the way their scribes and rabbi’s taught. In His miraculous healings and exorcisms there was also an unusual authority at work. Before Jesus’s death and resurrection these people weren’t able to see the full importance of His authority, But we know that Jesus is fully God, and fully able to deliver us from the devil, from our sin, and from our death.

Many Christians these days think they can retain faith in the Gospel alongside a rejection of the inerrancy and full authority of the Scriptures. Faith in Christ as Saviour is inseparable from faith in everything that the Scriptures say. It isn’t faith at all when people have the attitude over against God’s Word: They say things like ‘It wasn’t really like that!’ They say when they read that God created everything from nothing in six days, or for another example, - they want to say that things evolved from other things by chance and random reaction.

The Gospel of our salvation rests on the authoritative word about what God has done for us, with the authority and grace that only God has. This is an important aspect of faith, conviction of Jesus’s absolute authority, and profound respect for it. The point of authority in this passage is that only God can heal like this. Faith doesn’t bring the healing about, but receives the blessing. The same is true of saving faith. Faith doesn’t cause the redemption that Jesus has won. Faith receives this blessing, from Jesus, who is fully God, and fully able to deliver us from the devil, from our sin, and from our death.

Secondly, our faith should be in hearts that are truly humble. The army officer doesn’t only say, “**Lord**”, but he also said, “**I do not deserve that You should come in under my roof.**” He was a humble man, and knew his proper place.

Humility is an important aspect of saving faith, just as much as faith in God's power to heal sickness. One of the lessons we need to learn is that God's grace is a precious thing. We should trust it and rely on it, but never take it for granted, - or presume on it, as though it were only right and proper that God should treat us in grace. We need to be humble, because God deals with people in ways that don't make sense to us at times. He attached His promise to the younger, Isaac, not the elder, Ishmael, in Gen21. He attached it to the younger, Jacob, not the elder Esau. in Gen 27. He sent the reluctant Moses back to Egypt, and when Moses was on the way back, God tried to kill him. [Exodus 4:24] He led Israel into the desert, and then kept them there for forty years.[Exodus 12:33 ff.] He blessed Job richly, and then He allowed the Devil to take away everything except his life and his complaining wife! [Job 2:9,10.]

People who are aware of their great need are humble people. This centurion was humble, because he was at his wits end for his slave, who was beyond medical help and dying, and was precious to him. The officer knew that he couldn't heal him by his own resources or power, or by calling on any other person except Jesus. It was obvious, he thought that Jesus had great authority that went far beyond human authority. It was heavenly authority. He told Jesus his need, **"Lord, my servant is lying at home suffering terribly please come and heal him."**

This officer didn't think he was good enough to go to Jesus in person with his request, or to have Jesus come into his house. His message was, - **"Lord, do not trouble Yourself! For I do not deserve that You should come in under my roof. ⁷ That is why I did not think that I was worthy to come to You either. Rather, just give an order, and let my servant be healed!"** Our faith ought to have alongside it humility before God because our sin has made us unworthy. Esau despised his birthright. Moses neglected to circumcise his sons. Israel complained in spite of God's miraculous intervention for them. We should never think that who we are gives us a claim on God. When we say the Lord's prayer we should never say it as though we were allowing God to do what we ask, but as miserable beggars, depending on Him for everything.

Sometimes people who are new to the Christian faith see this with greater clarity than those who have come to think of our faith as old, or a natural thing. They have felt secure, because they regard themselves as blessed possessors, who have a right to God's blessings. Many Israelites were like that at Jeremiah's time. Jeremiah said to God, **"LORD, do not Your eyes look for truth? Although You have struck them down, they have felt no pain. Although You have consumed them, they have refused to accept correction. They have made their faces harder than rock. They have refused to turn back."** [Jeremiah 5:3.]

Many people at Capernaum were casual about the miracles Jesus performed there. Jesus said, **"As for you, Capernaum, you will not be lifted up to heaven, will you? You will go down to hell."** [Matt 11:23.] Most of God's chosen people rejected their Messiah when He came. In our own day we have seen a bad tendency among Christians including Lutherans, who ought to know better, to be so casual about the things that really matter. They don't treasure God's authoritative word as much as they should. Is it because they have lost proper humility that they are unworthy receivers, and who need to continue with faith in the heart. Christ, the authoritative deliverer from sin, death, and the devil should always be in the centre of our hearts. I wonder sometimes when Jesus comes how many of those who claim to be Christian will be with the Lord in heaven. Jesus once asked in Luke **"But when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?"** [Luke 18:8.]

The lessons we should learn from this are obvious. We should never doubt the authority of a single sentence of God's Word. We should be genuinely humble before God. We should remember that we should never think that saving faith in Jesus Christ is a matter of going through certain motions, and having certain external connections. It must be trust in the heart, - in God's grace, - which we haven't deserved.

When the messengers returned to the officer's house, they must have been astonished to see his slave well again. Our salvation is so great that it should continue to astonish us too!. People who are proud and self-sufficient don't have that feeling of astonishment. Here in our Gospel we see God's real authority, and the purpose of His authoritative Word, - in Jesus Christ, - our Lord, - our Saviour. **Amen.**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

3rd Hymn: 566,

Prayer of the Church 2nd Sunday after Pentecost 2018

P The Lord provides for His people a place of rest in His Son, Jesus Christ. Let us commend ourselves, one another and our whole life into His loving hands.

Brief Silence

P Holy Father, remember Your Church throughout all the world and give to Your baptized children a rich share in Your light and in Your peace... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P At the dawn of time, You commanded the light to shine in the darkness, and through the preaching of Your Son's victory You have made Your light to shine in our hearts. Bless the proclamation of all the servants of Your Word, that they would never proclaim themselves but instead proclaim Jesus as Lord and themselves as servants for His sake... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P King of the nations, to Your kindness and care we commend our prime minister, federal, state, and local governments. Those in the police, doctors, nurses, fire and ambulance and state emergency services, and our military personal serving to aid all Your people. Instill upon them the conviction that they are Your servants to guide, protect, defend, and to promote peace and good order in our land. Lead them to act honestly and justly for the welfare of all... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Kind One, in the gift of Sabbath to Your ancient people, You taught them that all have a share in the goodness of Your creation. Remember all who struggle to find employment, to get out of debt, to provide for their loved ones. Open the hearts of all, that we may share with one another in Your rich bounty and be delivered from all greed and selfish care... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Hope of the heavy-hearted, remember in Your love all those who are afflicted in any way, that they may not be crushed; the perplexed, that they may not despair; the persecuted, that they may not be forsaken; and those struck down, that they may not be destroyed. We especially commend to You all whom we have been asked to remember at this altar: especially thanking You for the return of our brother Percy who is home from hospital;... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Father of glory, Your Son revealed Himself as the Lord of love. He sets before His own a rich feast in which He still touches us and heals us and does us good, inviting us to receive the very ransom price of our salvation, His true body and blood. Help all who come to the altar today to rest in His promises and to revel in His love... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Source of all being and life, receive our grateful praise for all those who died trusting in the Saviour's mercy and so live in Him forevermore. As we await the day of the resurrection when the Spirit will cause the life of Jesus to be fully manifested in our mortal bodies, fill us with hope and joyful expectation... Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

4th Hymn: 849,