Pentecost 2 Luke 7:1-10
June 19, 2022 405-404-419-446

The Faith Jesus Praises…
I. Is a fruitful faith.
II. Is a humble faith.
III. Is a confident faith.

Dear Christian friends,

School's over for another year. Graduation parties are being held. **Oh yes**, report cards have also gone home. Teachers are reporting to the **parents** on how well their children did this year. Did they MAKE THE GRADE? Did they pass with **flying colors** – pass by the skin of their teeth – or will they be back for **another try**?

Report cards aren't just PASS/FAIL. They can also show areas of **strength** or **weakness**. A student can be really good at **one subject** and at the same time be **really struggling** in another subject.

We could say Jesus here is HANDING OUT **report cards**. But Jesus isn't grading math or science. Jesus is grading a PERSON'S FAITH. **One person** gets singled out by Jesus for HIGH PRAISE. A **whole group** of people – let's just say Jesus was DISAPPOINTED with them. So WHAT GRADE would Jesus give **your** faith? I'm not asking **what grade** YOU WOULD GIVE yourself but **what grade** Jesus would give you/me. **From these verses** we learn that THE FAITH JESUS PRAISES is 1)a fruitful faith, 2)a humble faith, 3)a confident faith.

I. A fruitful faith.

Jesus has the advantage in **grading** a person's faith. Jesus can look directly into a person's heart and see what's REALLY THERE. We can't do that. We can only go by OUTWARD **appearances** – by HOW a person lives – **acts** – **talks** – **treats other** people, etc. ***"Man looks at the outward appearance but the LORD looks at the heart,"*** is how the Bible puts it.

God's Word makes clear that WHAT'S IN a person **heart** will show up in their **life** – FOR GOOD or bad. A person's faith will show up in their **daily life**. Jesus said, ***"If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."*** James in his letter makes the point that a FRUITLESS **faith** is a DEAD faith – it's not the REAL THING. That person may think **he's a believer** but he's only kidding himself.

Jesus could look into this **centurion's** heart. We can only go **by his life** – and we easily see that his was a FRUITFUL FAITH. We see his faith IN HIS LOVE for his ***"servant who was sick and about to die."*** Under Roman law this servant was NOT A PERSON but **property**. **Under Roman law** the centurion didn't owe his servant **any care**. He could legally let his servant **just die** and he would not be charged with murder. LEGALLY he **could do** that but his faith WOULDN'T LET him. He had to get help – JESUS' help! – for his servant.

We also see this centurion's **faith** IN HIS LOVE **for the Jews**. Now there was no love lost between Jews and Gentiles – between Jews and **Roman soldiers**. Neither could stand the other. But these Jewish elders tell Jesus that this centurion ***"loves our nation."*** He showed that love by building them a synagogue **at his own expense**. By building that synagogue the centurion also showed his love FOR GOD'S WORD. He wanted people to have a DECENT PLACE **to come** to hear and learn God's Word.

Now think of a STRANGER LOOKING **at you**. Can they see your faith **showing up** in your DAILY life? Just by watching you and listening to you can they SEE HOW IMPORTANT Jesus is to you – can they see how God's love HAS CHANGED you? John tells us, ***"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."*** If I can't stand someone – if I'm carrying a grudge or talking about someone **behind their back** – WHAT'S THAT SAYING about **my** faith? What does your church

attendance say about YOUR LOVE for **God's Word**? Is my/your faith bearing ***"much fruit"*** or is IT IN NEED of some **serious** weeding and watering?

The Jewish elders praised this centurion to Jesus. ***"They begged Jesus earnestly, saying, 'He is worthy of having You do this for him, because he loves our nation, and he built our synagogue for us.'"*** THEY may have thought that way – BUT NOT this centurion. His confidence was **not in** ALL HE HAD DONE for God, "Hey, Lord, look at me and **how great** a believer I am!" The faith Jesus praises is…

II. A humble faith.

Jesus headed back with the Jewish elders to the centurion's house. **Somehow** word got back to the centurion that JESUS HIMSELF was coming to him. The centurion wasn't expecting that **at all**. WHO WAS HE to have Jesus come to his house? He sends some friends to tell Jesus, ***"Lord, do not trouble Yourself, because I do not deserve to have You come under my roof. That is why I did not consider myself worthy to come to You."*** According to this centurion he WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH 1)to have Jesus come into his house – **why**, 2)he wasn't even good enough to **go talk** to Jesus HIMSELF. He asked others to **talk to Jesus** FOR HIM.

"I do not deserve… I did not consider myself worthy to come to You." In other words, "I'm NOT GOOD ENOUGH." There is **absolutely** NO ROOM for pride – for a chip on our shoulders – **in our relationship** with God. Yet we do often see just that. So many think GOD OWES them **whatever**. God **owes** them a good life – good health – a good job, etc. Then when God doesn't do EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANTED – when life doesn't go EXACTLY **as they planned** - they get ALL TICKED OFF at God. **Some** even give up on God.

The key to a **humble** faith is HONESTY – being honest WITH ourselves ABOUT ourselves. Simple honesty is that **not a single one** of us is GOOD ENOUGH to come into **God's presence** or to ask for God's help. Consider these words from Psalm 24, ***"Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart." "Clean hands – pure heart"*** – that's not you or me! Our hearts are THE PROBLEM! Corrupted by **original sin** our hearts don't love **God** – they LOVE TO SIN! Or listen to this from Psalm 15. ***"Lord, who may dwell in Your sanctuary? Who may live on Your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous*** (right in GOD'S eyes!)***, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander*** (lies) ***on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong."*** SIMPLE HONESTY is that's not me or you. A person can fool himself **into thinking** he's BASICALLY GOOD and decent but nobody can fool God.

Such simple honesty HURTS – but it also makes for a HUMBLE faith. Before anyone talks about GOD OWING us we need to first consider what WE OWE God – AND what we've really given God. Our sins are not LITTLE MISTAKES **here and there** – an OOPS **now and then**. They are DAY AFTER DAY defiance and disobedience to God's clear will. In all honesty God should justly make our **lives now** a LIVING HELL and then send us to the real hell for all eternity. We may not like to hear that but IT'S THE TRUTH – it's being HONEST.

A humble faith recognizes that God DOESN'T OWE us anything. Yet **such** a humble faith is CONFIDENT that God is here for us. This centurion was confident that Jesus COULD and WOULD help his servant. The FAITH JESUS PRAISES is also…

III. A confident faith.

This centurion's faith was confident of Jesus' ALMIGHTY WORD and **power**. There was really no need for Jesus to PERSONALLY COME to his house. ***"But say the word, and my servant will be healed."***

The centurion explained his CONFIDENCE in Jesus. ***"For I am also a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes; and to another one, 'Come!' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*** Being a soldier this centurion understood POWER and the LINE OF COMMAND. If his general tells him to **do something** he snaps right to it. If he tells his soldiers or **servants** to do something they JUMP right to it. JUST BY SPEAKING **the word** they get things done.

Yet their powerful words pale **compared** to JESUS' ALMIGHTY word. This centurion couldn't tell his servant, **"Be well!"** and instantly heal him. ONLY GOD has such almighty power. This centurion confidently believes Jesus IS HIS GOD ***"with whom nothing is impossible."***

We too can BE CONFIDENT of Jesus' **mercy** and **willingness** to help with ANY problem – BIG or small. Just look again at **how Jesus helps** us with our BIGGEST PROBLEM of all – our sin and guilt, death and the devil. **In wonderful love** Jesus took it upon Himself to DO EVERYTHING to save us **from ending up** in hell. We don't have ***"clean hands"*** or ***"pure hearts"*** so Jesus took our place and lived that life or PERFECT LOVE and **obedience** that we owed God. We deserved to be punished – **damned** to hell – because of our sins. Jesus took the blame for the sins of the **whole world** and was punished in our place. Jesus personally paid for **every one** of our sins by sacrificing His own innocent life on the cross. **Trusting in Jesus** we can BE CONFIDENT that God has forgiven all our sins – CONFIDENT that we are going straight to heaven when we die – because our confidence is IN JESUS and ALL HE'S DONE for us.

Jesus wants us to BE SO CONFIDENT in our faith. He praises this centurion's CONFIDENT faith. ***"I tell you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel."*** As Jesus praises the **centurion's** faith did you also catch His DISAPPOINTMENT? You would have expected the **Jews** to have such fruitful – **humble** – **confident** faith. They had God's Word and **worship**. Their history was a history of God's MERCY – **power** – **faithfulness**. Yet only a few of them REALLY believed. So many FOOLED themselves with a **dead, empty** faith.

And that brings us back TO US. We too have God's **Word**. Our lives show God's **mercy**, power and **faithfulness**. What grade would JESUS GIVE **your faith** – **my faith**? SIMPLE HONESTY is that we all have room to **grow** in our faith. GOD HELP **each one** of us to have the FAITH JESUS PRAISES - a fruitful – humble – confident faith. Amen.

NICENE CREED