

POWER HOUR

4/14/2024

Lesson Text:
Luke 7:1-20

Background Scripture:
Luke 7:1-10

Devotional Reading:
Zechariah 8:18-23

“FAITH OF A CENTURION”

NLT TRANSLATION

Learning Facts: To identify the reason for Jesus' amazement.

Biblical Principle: To explain the role of the town of Capernaum in Jesus' ministry.

Daily Application: To brainstorm ways to exhibit faith as analogous (similar) to that of the centurion.

Luke 7:1-10 NLT

1 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people, he returned to Capernaum. **2** At that time the highly valued slave of a Roman officer was sick and near death. **3** When the officer heard about Jesus, he sent some respected Jewish elders to ask him to come and heal his slave. **4** So they earnestly begged Jesus to help the man. “If anyone deserves your help, he does,” they said, **5** “for he loves the Jewish people and even built a synagogue for us.” **6** So Jesus went with them. But just before they arrived at the house, the officer sent some friends to say, “Lord, don’t trouble yourself by coming to my home, for I am not worthy of such an honor. **7** I am not even worthy to come and meet you. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. **8** I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.” **9** When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd that was following him, he said, “I tell you, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel!” **10** And when the officer’s friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed.

LESSON CONTEXT

The physical context of today's lesson is the village of Capernaum (see also the parallel account in Matthew 8:5–13). It was located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, a freshwater lake in northern Palestine, and was Jesus' primary resting place during His

great Galilean ministry. Matthew 9:1 calls Capernaum "his own city." Since Jesus had no home of His own (Luke 9:58), He must have stayed with one or more of the disciples who lived there (for example Peter's wife's family or Matthew). The village became something of a headquarters or base of operations for His preaching and teaching tours of Galilee (Matthew 4:13; Mark 2:1).

The importance of Capernaum is seen in the fact that it is mentioned 16 times in the New Testament, in one instance quite negatively (Matthew 11:23 and parallel Luke 10:15). Five of Jesus' twelve disciples were residents of Capernaum when Jesus called them to follow him: four fishermen (James, John, Peter, and Andrew; see Matthew 4:18–22) and one tax collector (Matthew, also known as Levi; see Mark 2:14).

Although Capernaum probably did not have more than a few hundred residents, it was a thriving regional hub for at least three reasons. First, the fishing industry provided steady income for many families. The lake was productive, with one account telling of a haul of 153 large fish (John 21:11). Fishing businesses like that of the Zebedee family (Mark 1:19–20) would have caught more fish than could be sold locally. So some fish were preserved with salt and sent to larger cities such as Jerusalem.

Second, Capernaum was situated on the main road from Damascus into the region. This location made it a good place for the Romans to set up points for tax collectors to assess tolls on goods passing into the area. Matthew worked for the Romans this way, maintaining a tax-collecting booth on this road (Luke 5:27). Jewish tax collectors from Jerusalem also operated out of Capernaum to collect the annual temple tax from the Jews of Galilee (Matthew 17:24).

Third, Capernaum was important enough to have had some Roman soldiers stationed there, as today's lesson reveals (compare Acts 10:1). The need to safeguard the tax money collected may have been the reason. It is possible they were under the authority of Herod Antipas, the Roman client "tetrarch" of the Galilee region from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39 (Luke 3:1).

Capernaum has been the site of some remarkable archaeological discoveries over the last hundred years. A lavish synagogue dating from the fourth century A.D. likely sat on a foundation floor from the time of Jesus. This place could be the location of the synagogue of Capernaum where Jesus taught (Mark 1:21). Also uncovered nearby is a large house that has become a Christian pilgrimage site. Evidence suggests this was the actual house of Simon Peter, a place where Jesus resided while in town (Luke 4:38).

QUESTION(S)

- In what ways can your congregation act as a go-between in connecting

resources to those in need?

- In what ways is humility crucial for your formation into Christlikeness? How does James 4:6–10 inform your response?
- What distractions do you need to remove to live with "great faith"?

CONCLUSION

Centurion Faith

When we offer up intercessory prayer for the healing of a friend or family member, are we exercising the faith of the centurion? Without a doubt, any forthcoming healing will be a "remote healing" since Jesus is not here in the flesh, so that is not the issue.

The issue, instead, is one of believing in Jesus' authority. That's the essence of what we might call "Centurion Faith." Our intercessory prayers must have more than a "maybe" or "hope so" tone. When we fix our eyes on Jesus, we demonstrate "Centurion Faith" that God will answer our prayers. When we are distracted from Him and wring our hands in despair, nothing good happens (Matthew 14:25–31). Jesus taught, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer" (Matthew 21:22).

The centurion's background speaks loudly. He had cultivated friendships within his community for years. He had treated his neighbors with respect and honor, not pulling his rank as a Roman officer to get his way. In many ways, the significant gap between the Jews and Gentiles of Jesus' day was bridged on that day in Capernaum. The centurion had used his wealth and influence to protect the Jews and provide a gathering place for their study of Scripture sincerely and authentically. When his household was in need, his character and actions were remembered. Can the same be said of ours?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, our lives constantly need Your support and healing. Our churches and homes need Your presence. May we honor You in all ways and never doubt. May we have great faith like the centurion! We pray in the name of Jesus, your Son. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Have "Centurion Faith!"

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is called "Faith of an Anointer," where we will compare and contrast the mindsets of Jesus, the Pharisee, and the woman. Study Luke 7:36–50.